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THE HISTORY OF THE SACRED PASSION.

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THE HISTORY OF THE SACRED PASSION

From the Spanish of

FATHER LUIS DE LA PALMA

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

The translation revised and edited by

HENRY JAMES COLERIDGE

OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

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ORBIS · REDEMPTI · CONDITOR
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MORTEM · SUBIRES · INNOCENS
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PREFACE.

[BY THE EDITOR.]

FATHER LUIS DE LA PALMA, the author of the following pages, was a Spanish member of the Society of Jesus in the first century of its existence, having entered the Novitiate, at the age of sixteen, in 1575, and having died at Madrid in 1641, at the ripe age of eighty-two years, sixty-six of which had been spent in religion. Father Palma was a native of Toledo. He appears to have been distinguished for those gifts which make a good religious Superior, as he was twice Provincial of the province of Toledo, and spent many years in governing various Colleges of the Society. That he was a man of sound and deep theological learning is sufficiently proved by the work which is now presented to the English reader, and which he informs us himself was meant as a sort of Introduction and Companion to a much larger book on the Spiritual Life according to the method and rules of St. Ignatius. Of this larger work we have only fragments remaining, which are, however, complete in themselves as treatises on specific subjects.* Everything that he has written is of the most sterling value, and has always been very highly esteemed, especially by those who have laboured in illustrating

* One of these, *On the Particular Examen*, has lately been published by the publishers of the present volume.

and explaining the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. As a proof of this I may mention that in one of the most recent and most valuable works on the Exercises, published at Rome in 1868 by Father Giuseppe Ciccolini, at the time director of the House of Exercises at Sant' Eusebio, a large proportion of the explanations of the plan of St. Ignatius is taken from Father Palma's work, the *Camino Spirituale.*

The intention of the author in the work now published is explained by himself in the Prologue which is prefixed to this volume, and which may be safely recommended as an admirable summary of St. Ignatius' method of meditation called the Exercise of the Three Powers. He there tells us that the book is designed both for simple reading and also for the purpose of furnishing matter to those who are in the habit of practising meditation, and of preparing their meditation for themselves. Those who use the book for the first named purpose will hardly discover that it is intended also to serve the other; while those who practice meditation and refer to these pages for matter pregnant with rich considerations and suggestive of copious affections and practical resolutions, will not find it easy to exhaust the stores which are here so unostentatiously collected. It may be worth while to point out that the design of the author that his book should thus serve the purpose of a storehouse for meditation on the Passion accounts for the only kind of amplification which he has allowed himself. This is the paraphrastic commentary which he generally substitutes for or subjoins to the words of our Blessed Lord in the various scenes of the Passion. The meaning of these sacred words is often very fully and lovingly

brought out, although the narrative form in which the whole work is cast might less naturally suggest this method of treatment, so valuable to those who desire to feed on the sayings of our Blessed Saviour in all their rich fertility of meaning.

Father Palma has taken one whole chapter from the famous John of Avila's *Treatise on the Love of God*, and his references to that author in other places are frequent. His example may serve as an excuse, if any be needed, for the single addition which has been made in this translation to the original text, namely, the insertion, at the beginning of the history, of the Prelude to the Meditation on the Passion written by the celebrated Father Jerome Nadal, who, though not one of the original companions of St. Ignatius, was sought out by the Saint even during his own sojourn in Paris, and, when he had joined his former friend after the lapse of many years, became one of the most conspicuous Fathers of the first generation of the Society. The reader will remark how much this Prelude embodies of the grand theology of the Incarnation, carrying out in this the thought specially insisted on by St. Ignatius in his directions for meditation on the Passion, that we should continually remind ourselves Who it is that suffers. As Father Palma has mentioned in his own Prologue that he has divided the narrative of the Passion into paragraphs, with an especial view to the use of his book by persons who are in the habit of meditating, I have endeavoured to make the analytical table of contents as complete as possible, in order that a glance at that table may serve the purpose of the shortest possible summary of each paragraph.

I fear that the translation will be found to be, at least in parts, rugged and unpolished; but I have tried, on the other hand, to make it as faithful as possible, and to that object I have been well content to sacrifice smoothness of style, though the original deserves the most careful rendering in matter and in form. Palma belongs to what I believe is the best age of Spanish religious literature: the age of Louis of Grenada, John of Avila, Louis of Leon, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Louis da Ponte, and other famous writers. In point of style he is, perhaps, not equal to them, but he shares with many of these writers the characteristics of masculine common sense, theological culture alike exquisite and solid, and the tenderest and simplest piety. Happily these are qualities which do not easily evaporate in a translation.

I may also add that I have thought it better not to attempt in any way to edit Father Palma as to points on which he would perhaps write differently were he living in the present century. Since his time the study of the characteristics of the several Gospels and of the object with which they were originally written, and the careful and critical examination of questions of harmony, have certainly made no little real progress, and though in general we find him surprisingly in agreement with the results of the soundest criticism of this kind, there are perhaps some points as to which other arrangements of the history might seem preferable to that which he has followed. His account of the Via Dolorosa from Adrichomius is drawn from the best sources available to him, and shows the importance which he attached to these local questions, though his conclusions may sometimes be as

uncertain as his description of the moon placing itself in front of the sun to produce the miraculous darkness at the Crucifixion seems to us to be fantastical. In the same way, he is certainly uncritical in admitting as genuine the ancient, but apocryphal, letter to Tiberius, attributed to Pontius Pilate, and modern science will probably smile at his statement about the four humours and the four elements in connection with the reality of our Lord's Body. But to enter into these questions at any length would have increased the bulk of the volume, and would also have been foreign to the purpose for which the translation has been made.

That purpose will have been abundantly gained, if this volume should in any way tend to spread the knowledge and assist the contemplation of the great mystery of our Redemption, and especially if it shall facilitate that use, first of the Christian reason and then of the heart, upon the several scenes of that mystery, in which the spiritual exercise of meditation essentially consists. If to raise a wayside Cross, or to set up a picture of the Crucifixion, is a service acceptable to the Sacred Heart of Him Who had us all present to His thoughts while suffering for us, we may well be thankful for the privilege of being allowed to lay at the foot of His Cross these humble labours, which have had no other object than that of making His Passion better known to those for whom it was endured.

H. J. C.

London, Feast of St. Laurence, 1872.

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Prologue

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus.

§ I.

Reasons for writing this History of the Sacred Passion.

I HAVE in hand, very Reverend Fathers and dearest Brothers, a long treatise, in which my aim is with great care and at full length to explain the spiritual way, with all its stages and parts, from the beginning of conversion to the final attainment of perfection, after the manner and form which our Blessed Father St. Ignatius has taught us in his book of the Spiritual Exercises. This book, if our Lord sees good to grant me time and His grace to accomplish it, will, as I think and hope, be for His glory and the honour of our holy Founder, and also for the profit of us who profess to belong to and who follow his Society. But before bringing the first volume to light, I have thought it good first to issue this short history of the Sacred Passion. Among many other motives which have influenced me to this is the following.

One of the principal exercises of this spiritual way is that of meditation. Now, those who meditate, particularly at the outset, are often wont to find themselves devoid of matter, and are glad if some one gives them some points on which they may profitably employ their thoughts. Now, so it is, that although the Blessed Father St. Ignatius has laid down in his book some admirable rules as to how the matter should be divided for those who are to meditate, nevertheless, what he

has left us of these points of meditation is little or nothing—so exclusively was he occupied in guiding those who were moving along the spiritual way, in giving them instructions how to perform any exercises of the kind with profit, and in furnishing them with rules for making their choices and determinations, without any bias of passion, as also with excellent advice drawn from his own experience and that divine light which was his teacher in gaining all prudence and discretion in spiritual matters and the knowledge of the various spirits which are wont to work within us. And as what men in general seek for and desire to find in books are tender and devout discourses which may move their will, such as are not to be found in the book of which I speak—while, on the other hand, the rules contained in it are subtle and refined, stated with brevity and in simple words, intended more for the aid of the director who gives the exercises than for his disciples who make them—hence it is that this book, so rich in spiritual learning, is known to few and understood by fewer. Thus there has been need for a larger treatise in order to explain the book, and so give to the world the treasures therein locked up, that men may enjoy them, and to bring to day the light and wisdom hidden therein that they may be seen—for, as the Wise Man says, "Wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is not seen, what profit is there in both?"[1] And so also it seemed well to supply the deficiency, if so it may be called, of matter of meditation, a thing which our holy Father left to the care of the directors who were to give the exercises to others, and who were to set before them the points on which they were to meditate, accommodating themselves in everything to their capacities and their needs. This, then, has been the reason why I have thought fit to write in the first place this history of the Sacred Passion, to satisfy the devotion of many, and help the needs of others who are in want of matter to meditate on, and who desire to have a beginning made for them by means of some considerations well founded on truth, so to direct thereby their reflections and to move their affections to the exercise of perfect virtues.

[1] Ecclus. xx. 32.

It is, indeed, true that the matters on which we may usefully meditate are very abundant and embrace many subjects, such as the guilt of sins, the punishments that answer to them, the four last things of man, that is, death, judgment, hell, and the glory of heaven. It is true that any of these, if meditated upon aright, have great power to put a rein on our appetites and evil inclinations, and to lead us to despise the perishable things of earth and to love those which are eternal and heavenly. Again, in the same way, most copious and profitable matter for meditation is contained in the whole story of the life of Christ our Lord, and in every separate passage thereof, His miracles, His sermons, and His doctrine, wherein is contained the sum of all truth; in His Sacred Passion and death, His glorious resurrection and ascension; and, again, in the benefits of God and His divine perfections. It is true that all these things are matter for meditation; every one of them, moreover, contains many and different parts, each of which may be divided into several points, and every point has tender considerations of its own, and may be looked at in various ways, some being more suitable for some seasons and persons, and others for other seasons and persons. All this is true: and yet, with all this, the history of the Sacred Passion and death of our Saviour contains excellences and advantages of its own above all other subjects on which we can exercise ourselves in meditation.

For, in the first place, as we shall elsewhere show at greater length, meditation upon the Passion of our Lord is good for all persons and for all conditions of men. It has power to tear men away from a bad life and to rouse up beginners to sorrow for their sins and abhorrence of them. It gives vigour and a most perfect example of virtue to those who are making progress, and it is the most forcible incentive to love for the perfect. Again, as the Passion of our Lord was the last act of His life, so also it contains all that is highest and most complete in perfection. All our Lord's examples of virtue, which were scattered over the whole of His life, shine forth still more highly in His Passion. All the instruction contained in His discourses, all His doctrine and all His most excellent counsels

are preached in His Passion. All the depth of suffering that any one can undergo, all the extremities of misery to which any one may be brought in following justice, all are in the Passion; all deliverance from illusion and all learning of the truth are in the Passion; all knowledge, understanding, and heavenly wisdom are to be found in the Passion. The great Apostle of the Gentiles said that he knew nothing but Christ crucified, and, because of the greatness of the treasure herein hidden, we find that the saints occupied themselves ordinarily in this thought of the Passion, as may be proved from their works and treatises.

For this cause, therefore, and on account of the devotion that the whole Christian people in general feel towards the Passion of our Redeemer, I have thought well to choose this matter out of all other, and set it before those who meditate, giving them first some good instruction as to the manner to be followed in making meditation, though I leave the full discussion of this for my larger treatise

§ II.

Of the method which we should observe in meditating upon the Sacred Passion.

He who intends to recollect himself for some considerable time of the day, ought never to let himself be altogether distracted. He who desires to enter into himself from time to time, must never altogether go out of himself; and he who desires to come back to his own thoughts from time to time, must never go far away from himself. He who desires to keep his imagination quiet, and fix his attention on heavenly things, must never altogether let his senses wander at random over the things of the earth. He must guard his heart and thoughts if he desires to find them when he wills, for true is the proverb that says, 'He that keeps, finds.' He should persuade himself that the best disposition that he can get for meditating with profit, is to keep himself all day in peace and quietness of spirit, without allowing entrance to thoughts or passions which may disturb him.

When the time for meditation has come, let him place himself reverently before our Lord, imagining, what is true, that He is there present, and let him begin his spiritual exercise by offering himself with entire resignation to the divine will, asking of our Lord light to know what is most pleasing to His Divine Majesty, and grace to accomplish the same, as well in thought as in word and action. After this, let him do briefly three things as preludes to his meditation. First, let him recall to his memory the history or the passage on which he is to meditate. Secondly, let him picture the history to himself as though it were passing there before him, giving its own fixed and appropriate place to everything that passes in it. For example,

if he desire to meditate upon the Prayer in the Garden, let him imagine there before him a garden of a certain size and form, let him place therein at a certain spot the eight Apostles who remained somewhere near the entrance, then at another spot further on the three whom our Lord took aside with Him, and let him give His own proper place to our Blessed Saviour, Who withdrew from them as it were a stone's throw, to pray—so that the imagination may remain untroubled and quiet, having all around it and in their fixed places the objects on which it is to meditate. Thirdly, let him fix his eyes upon the fruit which he desires to draw from the meditation, such as fervour in prayer, patience in trouble, conformity to the divine will in adversity, or anything of the same sort in accordance with the subject, and let him beg of our Lord grace to meditate upon the passage, so as to gain from it the fruit at which he aims.

Having done this, let him apply himself to meditate upon that passage or part of the history which he has chosen. And let him understand that what is termed prayer or meditation is not a thing above the skies, that he must take wings in order to attain to it, neither is it beyond the seas, that he must take ship to reach it, but that it is a thing within ourselves, and that it is nothing else but the exercise of the three powers of the soul, and the making use of them as to spiritual matters, in the same manner as we make use of them in human and temporal concerns. For when a man sets himself to reflect upon a business which concerns him greatly, he first brings before his memory that business and its circumstances, secondly, he discourses with his understanding, weighing the arguments and the force that each one of them has, and from this proceeds to a third thing, which is to make a resolution and to purpose with his will to take or not this or that step, to do this or not, and the like, and it is by this resolution that the execution and action which he takes is regulated. Just the same course it is that is followed in prayer, though in a different subject-matter. The first thing is to present to the memory the point of the history on which we are to reflect. The second is to discourse with the understanding upon that point, weighing all

the circumstances contained in it, seeking out reasons, comparisons, and arguments calculated to move the will to abhor such or such a vice, or embrace that virtue at which we may aim. And the third, which is the outcome, end, and fruit of the whole meditation, consists in the good resolutions made by the will, and which are afterwards to be carried into effect in a change of life and in the practice of virtuous actions.

The same thing may well be explained by the example of the nourishment of the body. In this it is the hand that divides the food and conveys it to the mouth. Then the morsel which enters the mouth entire is there broken up by the teeth and jaws, while the palate tastes and savours it. Thence it is carried into the stomach for digestion, and then the food, being digested and made into blood, is distributed over the whole body, and communicates itself to every part thereof, to give it life, increase, and vigour. And in this we may take much note of the faithfulness with which one part of the body serves the rest, no one part ever refusing the work which belongs to it by reason of its office, nor exalting itself, nor retaining what does not belong to it, but giving it up to the part whose it is, in order to the end which nature has in view. For the hand which divides the food does not retain it for itself, but places it in the mouth. Nor does the mouth, which masticates it and breaks it up with its own labour, take upon itself to keep it there for its own taste, but faithfully passes it on to the stomach. Nor does the stomach, which spends its own heat and force in digesting the food, claim it as for itself, but distributes it over the whole body, that all the members may receive strength to perform their own offices. It seems as if we could not find any comparison more to our purpose for the explanation of the matter of which we are treating. For the food of the soul is the word of God and the eternal truths. These truths are divided into their parts and points, as it were into several morsels, and then the memory proposes them to the understanding; the understanding breaks them up by means of its discourses, turns them over and over from one side to another with much taste and savour of spirit—for these usually follow upon the understanding of the truth. When

these truths have been thus ruminated, the will burns and consumes them with the love of good and abhorrence of evil, with good purposes and resolutions, and with the love of God, for in this consists the satisfaction and fulness of the spirit. And if this love of God be truly in the soul, all the virtues increase and are sustained by it, and from it proceeds the fruit of good works. For, as the Apostle says, charity is patient and kind, is humble and not ambitious, believes all things and hopes all things, is compassionate and merciful, and seeks not its own interest, and, in fact, is the queen and mother of all the virtues. In this way, then, the memory is as the hand which conveys the food to the mouth, the understanding is the mouth which masticates it and breaks it up, the will is the stomach which receives it and consumes it by heat, and distributes it over all the actions and practices of virtue. If the memory were to content itself with the truth, without ruminating it, it would be simply the reading of a spiritual book, dry and without taste or profit. And if the whole exercise were to close with the discourse of the understanding, it would be mere study and speculation, and would not have gone far enough to be prayer. Prayer differs in this respect from study, that it extends to the moving of the will and the formation of good desires and resolutions. And if these desires are not efficacious, and do not go on to execution, the whole exercise remains sterile and fruitless. So, then, meditation is the use and exercise of the three powers of the mind upon those eternal truths which appertain to the reformation of life and the salvation of the soul, in the manner which we have explained. Let us now see how each one of these powers may be helped in the work of meditation.

§ III.

How the memory may be aided in the work of meditation.

When we employ a servant to work in our house we take care that he have provided and at hand all the materials necessary for his work, that he may not waste time in searching or waiting for them. In this work of meditation it is the duty of the memory to provide the materials, that is, to have ready at hand the points on which the understanding has to labour by its discourse, and from which the will has to form its good resolutions and affections. And for want of this provision people are wont to lose much of the time set apart for prayer, whilst they are seeking for matter on which to meditate and a fixed and determined subject to which to apply their attention. So that when the time of prayer comes the memory ought to be already provided with what is to be meditated on.

The principal help towards the accomplishment of this is when the spiritual director of the exercises places before us in due course the points for meditation, accommodating himself in this to the capacity and disposition of him who makes the exercises, both as regards the matter for meditation and the manner of proposing it. But it is not always that this can be so. Most generally the book has to supply the want of the living voice of the teacher, that part of the history on which meditation is to be made being read over betimes. And if the meditation has to be made at midnight or in the morning, this piece of diligence must be practised before retiring to rest. Moreover, with regard to this point, our holy Father St. Ignatius recommends[1] that after retiring to rest and before going to sleep we should recall to mind the hour at which we

[1] Add. 1, 2.

are to rise and the exercise of meditation we are to make, and to recall them in the same way on awaking, thus shutting the door upon all other thoughts, and applying our attention to the subject of meditation. All these diligences are natural to a careful soul, and their object is that the memory shall be ready to supply matter to the understanding at the time of meditation, just as the master of a house who has guests to entertain, inquires very frequently if the dishes be prepared and ready, so that the guests may not be kept waiting after they have taken their places at the table.

He who supplies another with matter for meditation ought to observe three things recommended by our glorious Father St. Ignatius; and the book from which any one has to prepare matter for prayer ought, as far as possible, to secure the same objects. The first is that the history shall be related with fidelity and truth. On this point, St. Ignatius lays stress in the second Annotation, where he says[2]—'The person who gives the matter and order for meditation or contemplation to another, ought faithfully to narrate the history of such contemplation or meditation; discoursing only upon its several points with brevity and explaining them summarily, so that the person who is to make the meditation may take the true foundation of the history and may reflect and reason upon this himself,' &c. So it is, that from falsehood no solid profit can be drawn, and no firm building can be raised thereon. Therefore, for instance, in the Passion of our Lord, what use is it to exaggerate and enhance this or that particular, or imagine things which never took place, and all this for the sake of moving the people to tears and compassion, as if the truth of what was then done and what is related by the Evangelists did not afford infinite motives for tears and pity? As to this, we may say with holy Job[3]—'Hath God any need of your lie that you should speak deceitfully for Him?' For this reason we have taken care in this history of the Sacred Passion to keep as closely as was possible to the text of the Gospels, and have noted at the foot of the page and with great minuteness the chapter

[2] Annot. 2. [3] Job xiii. 7.

and verse of the Evangelist whence are taken those particular actions or words which we meditate successively. And those who have the curiosity to refer to these passages of the Gospels will be surprized to see how the Evangelists note down things much more minute and particular than is generally remarked by those who read in haste and with less attention.

The second thing to be observed is, that the truth of the history be proposed to him who meditates in such a manner as that a short explanation also be given him, so as to open a path in one direction or another, and to give him scope to make reflections for himself, and to draw from thence the affections which God will help him to. For it is certain that what each person finds out himself, either by his own reflections or through light from God, will give him more pleasure and will lead him to more profit than anything that he may meet with through the help and labours of others. It may well be that the ideas that he finds written in books are more wise, more ingenious, and polished, but they will not on that account be more profitable to him. It may be that his own reflections are ruder, his comparisons poorer, his reasons less subtle, and yet, with all this, it is very certain that by their means God will enlighten his understanding in the knowledge of His mysteries in a far higher degree, and will far more inflame his will with the love of eternal things, than in other ways. For this reason, the director who proposes the matter and arranges the points for meditation for another, ought to regulate himself in such a manner that, saying something which may make reflection easy, he shall not say all that might be said, but leave some difficulties to be overcome by the person who meditates, so that he may labour for himself, and so his meditation be more fruitful and savoury. The words in which our Father St. Ignatius recommends this are as follows[4]—'For he who meditates, taking the true foundation of the history, reflecting and reasoning for himself, and discovering something thereby which may render the history more plain or better felt, whether by means of his own reasoning, or inasmuch as his understanding is illuminated by divine power: this causes

[4] Annot. 2.

more pleasure and spiritual profit than if he who is giving the exercises had explained much and amplified the meaning of the history. For it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but feeling and tasting spiritual things interiorly.'

Hence we see the difference between books written to serve no further end than that they simply be read, and those written with the intention of furnishing material for calm and quiet meditation. For there are some persons who cannot of themselves apply their minds to meditation, either because their nature does not help them to it, or from their habits, or because they are disabled by the multitude of affairs which distract them. Devout and spiritual books are, therefore, of the greatest use to such persons—books which contain all that they desire, and where they find drawn out all the exercise of the three powers of the soul, that is to say, the history related for them, the reflections and considerations made, the affections moved, and the particular resolutions as to the practice of virtues formed. And this kind of reading gives sustenance and satisfaction to their spirit. There are other persons who have time to exercise themselves by themselves in meditation, and such as these do not like to find everything provided for them in a book, and nothing left to search out for themselves. They do not like to have it all given them ready done, without leaving them anything to do, because, when the spirit in time of recollection has nothing wherewith to occupy itself, it becomes remiss and careless, and is easily led away in useless and wandering speculations. This perhaps is the reason why, when people pray, our Lord does not grant without their asking, nor open without their knocking, nor let Himself be found unless He be sought. For this reason our Saviour said—'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.' All these things are images which suggest the fervour and earnestness which those who pray ought to have, and the great help to this which results from having something on which to labour, and some difficulties to overcome in prayer.

Of these two kinds of persons which we have been speaking of, the first, who do not apply themselves to meditation, and

wish to find everything written out for them in books, are like old and infirm persons who can only take sauces and essences and other liquid things, made into draughts, and, as it were, already digested. For such persons, the less trouble they have at the time of eating, so also the less taste and support do they gain from what they eat. But the others are like robust men, who, although they require that their food should be given them dressed and carved, do not, however, ask that it should be given to them already chewed, as is done with children. They do not ask to be excused from the trouble of crushing their food with their teeth and jaws, or of turning it over in their mouths with the tongue, because from this labour results the pleasant taste and relish of what they eat, and that the heat of the stomach consumes it more perfectly, and that it gives more solid sustenance, force and vigour to the whole body. So for those who are so weak in spirit as not to be able to apply their powers to the consideration and love of heavenly things, it is very useful and necessary that they should derive help from such books, in order that, reading them with moderate attention, they may have their understandings instructed and their will moved to some extent. But those who are strong enough to exercise themselves without help of others in meditation, should not take from books more than is necessary to fix their attention and arouse their powers of discourse, and then let them work with their own thoughts, and take pains to move their will with exclamations and colloquies, not of words well put together and studied, but of such as their own affection and fervour may dictate. For from this exercise it is that consolation and spiritual delight result, as well as those firm resolutions which are the parents of solid and perfect virtue.

Now, with regard to this history of the Sacred Passion, it has indeed been written with the desire that it should be of general use, but it is more particularly meant for those who engage in meditation and prayer. So we have taken pains to adapt our work as much as possible to those rules of our holy Father, and we have paid especial attention to three things. First, to set forth faithfully the history and its circumstances, which have

been taken for the most part from the passages in the Gospels cited at the foot of the page, and we have tried to do this in an historical manner, always following without any curtailment the thread of the narrative. For in this manner the reading of our work may be of pleasure and profit even to those who have no other aim than that of simply reading it. And, at the same time, those who exercise themselves in meditation upon the foundation of the true history—with which the memory ought to be furnished—may be able to found upon it the discourse of the understanding. Secondly, in the course of the history many considerations are given for the purpose of opening a way for the reflections of the understanding, but not so as to say formally, 'On this point we must consider first this, secondly that,' nor even expressly to state, 'This is the first point, this is the second point,' and so on. For, although this method be very good, and gives the matter for meditation in a more digested form, yet there are two difficulties which prevent it giving us full satisfaction. The first is that it cuts short the thread of the history, and tends in great measure to take away our pleasure in it and our thorough intelligence of it; the second, that it gives the considerations in so complete a state that there is nothing left for the person who meditates to do or to work upon, and this, as we have said, takes away from the meditation a great portion of its pleasure and profit. For this reason, although there are many considerations in this history with which the undertaking may feed and entertain itself, still they are all worked up into the story, so as not to be at all distasteful to those who have no other object than reading, and yet give well prepared matter for those who wish to make meditation to exercise themselves upon.

Thirdly, in order to aid the will, we have taken pains that the whole of the history should be, as it were, pregnant with good affections and resolutions of solid and perfect virtues, such as are those practised by our Saviour in His Passion, and this has been done by considering those virtues in particular and pointing out as with a finger His silence, His patience, His gentleness, His contempt of honour, His firmness and constancy, His love

of truth, His obedience and conformity to the divine will, together with the circumstances, occasions, and manner in which He practised those virtues, from the contemplation of which springs the desire to imitate Him in them. In the same manner we have dwelt, in their proper place, on the sublime ends which the Divine Providence had in view, and the extreme fitness of the means which were used, in the Passion, from which arises the affection of admiration ; and, again, the immense weight of His sufferings, the excess of His grief, the rudeness and cruelty of His enemies, from which arises compassion ; and, again, the great love with which our Lord suffered, whence arises the return of love ; the greatness of the evils from which He delivered us by His Passion, whence gratitude will spring—and so on with regard to other like affections, so that all profitable affections and all virtuous purposes are contained, as in their seed, in this history of the Sacred Passion. And although this is so, yet sometimes, though not often, we have introduced ejaculations or colloquies, as also the resolutions to practise virtue, in express and plain words, because these things are sweeter and more profitable to each one when they are the fruits of his own considerations and of the grace of God, which communicates itself secretly to each one as he requires. And for this reason, it is enough to place in the history the seed of these affections and resolutions, that that seed may be hidden in his heart by each one who meditates, that he may consume it by the secret heat of his own thoughts, and so by the influence of divine grace the flowers of good affections and desires may burst forth, and be followed by the fruits of those perfect virtues which are desired.

All this has been said in order to explain the second thing which our glorious Father St. Ignatius has taught us as to the manner of proposing the matter for meditation—that is to say, that a short explanation of the history should be given to arouse the consideration, yet so that something be left to the person who makes the meditation to work out for himself by his own reflections. For as when we want to fix a nail in a tree, we open a hole for it first with an auger of size proportionate to the bulk

of the nail, and then leave the nail to work its way further for itself under the blows which we give it—because without the help of the auger it will not enter, and yet if we make the hole larger, so that it enters at once and with room to spare, it will not take hold or stand fast—so is that which happens to those who make meditation. It is necessary to give them some explanation or consideration in proportion to their capacity or intelligence by which they may set off and guide their thoughts, and then to leave them to go on with their own exertions and labour. For if nothing is said to them they do nothing and find nothing to think of, and so either go off on temporal business and useless wanderings of mind, or give themselves to dry and dull considerations from which can result nothing but weariness and dizziness of head. And on the other hand, if, to avoid these inconveniences, we give them the considerations ready made and the affections and resolutions expressed and reduced to practice, they do not take hold of and insist upon these considerations and affections which have been made to others as they would if they were there own.

The third thing which our holy Father advises is that before entering upon meditation we should have the history divided into a certain and definite number of points. For although it be true that with some persons, either because they have greater light from Heaven, or because they are more quick and ready at discourse, every word is a point for them, yet in the case of others, because they have neither of these advantages, a whole history is hardly sufficient. And thus what in the case of some occupies them for meditation during a week or a month, is scarcely sufficient for others for hour. an Yet whichever be the case, it is, nevertheless, advisable that every one should be provided with the points on which he is to meditate, divided into a certain number. The words of St. Ignatius (in the third note after the Fourth Week) in which he speaks on this subject, are the following—'The third is, that although in all contemplations a certain number of points be given, as for example, three or five, yet he who meditates may make more or fewer as he shall find best. And for this it is

of great use, before entering upon contemplation, to anticipate and settle definitely in a certain number the points which he ought to take.' The reason of this is clear, because if we take the history thus ready divided into different points we are in possession of something definite to which to apply our attention when we meditate, and of something certain to return to when our thoughts are distracted; and when we find nothing more to consider on one point, there still remain a second and a third with which to occupy the appointed time. And having thought in this manner upon all and on each point separately, we shall have left nothing in that history whence we might derive some profit which we have not pondered and dwelt upon, and over which our understanding has not passed. But all these benefits would be lost, if we were to take the whole history at once, which would be like swallowing all our food at once without dividing it into mouthfuls so as to masticate them, and taste their savour, and swallow them one after another during the course of our meal.

We have, moreover, taken care to help the memory in this respect, for although we have not said expressly, this is the first point, this is the second, and so on, in order not to cut short, as we have more than once said, the thread of the narrative, yet we have made it a rule to have this history divided into many paragraphs, which may serve as marks for those who meditate to divide their meditation and make their points accordingly

§ IV.

How the understanding may be aided in meditating upon the Sacred Passion.

The memory being thus prepared and ready with matter to set forth for meditation, the next thing is for the understanding to hold discourse upon it. To this end it may be helped principally by two things. The first is, to consider in each history the circumstances to be found therein. The second is, in each of these circumstances which are considered, to search for reasons, comparisons, and arguments to move the will to the affections and resolutions which we may desire.

The circumstances which may be considered and pondered in any portion whatever of the history of the Sacred Passion, may be reduced to six, which are laid down by our glorious Father St. Ignatius in the first meditation of the Third Week. For the six points which he there marks out are not so much points for that particular exercise (which is upon the Last Supper), as general circumstances which ought to be considered in the whole history of the Passion, and which ought to be applied and adapted to all the other meditations, as our holy Father remarks and as we shall prove more at length elsewhere.

The first circumstance is of the persons who are introduced into the passage, that is to say, who they are; their dignity or mean condition; their merits or demerits; the habit, bearing, and disposition of each; their meekness and modesty, or their insolence and cruelty, and other things of the same sort. And to this it is that that consideration, so necessary in this matter, may be reduced, that is to say, Who the Person is Who suffers, and who they are through whom and for whom He suffers.

The second thing is to consider the words which are spoken, that is to say, the calumnies, accusations, false testimonies, insults, and blasphemies, and also the answers of Christ our Blessed Lord, so full of wisdom and humility, gentleness and firmness, modesty and majesty. And above all, we ought to consider the silence of our Saviour, which was so great and so remarkable, on such an occasion, that even the judge, who was a Gentile, marvelled at it greatly.

The third circumstance is the deeds which were done; that is to say, on the one side, the torments which were inflicted, their manner and their gravity; and on the other side, the patience and gentleness and the other virtues which shone forth so brightly in our Saviour.

The fourth is to pass on into the Heart of Christ our Lord, and to consider His sadness and anguish and the causes and motives of them, and still more His desire and hunger after suffering, His thirst for the salvation of souls, the burning love and charity towards God and man with which He suffered, and the other affections and desires of His most Sacred Heart.

The fifth point is to ascend still higher, to the consideration of His Divinity, and to observe how His Godhead concealed and dissembled Itself whilst suffering those insults, not hindering the sadness and torment of His most holy Humanity, not chastising His tormentors, but, on the contrary, sustaining them and giving them existence and movement and the like. Also, how His Divinity gave infinite value to the sufferings of Christ; again, how He was occupied in reconciling all the world to His Father, to Himself, and to the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle says.[1] 'For God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'—*Quoniam quidem Deus erat in Christo mundum reconcilians sibi.*

The sixth consideration is to observe for whom He suffered these afflictions, that is to say, for me and for my sins, and to consider what it is reasonable that I should do and suffer in return and in gratitude for so great a benefit. It will, moreover, be a great help to look upon these mysteries as though they

[1] 2 Cor. v. 13.

had been done for my sake alone. For I was as much present to the eyes of Christ our Lord when He suffered as though I had been alone and no one else in the world; and I had as large a share of those merits and may profit by them as largely as if I had been the only one to reap their benefits. For each single person does not the less enjoy the light of the sun because there are many others upon whom its rays fall, nor would one enjoy them more if he were alone and if there were no other person in the world. And lastly, the charity of Christ our Saviour was so great, that if necessary He would have suffered for one alone that which He suffered for the whole world. For all these reasons, I ought to take to myself the whole weight of this benefit and hold myself obliged to give thanks for it and profit by it as though I were alone to do so. In this manner, it would seem, the Apostle Paul meditated upon the Passion, when he said,[2] *Qui dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*—'Who loved me and delivered Himself for me.'

These, then, are the circumstances by which the understanding must help itself, in order to feed and expand its discourse, whilst meditating upon the Sacred Passion. It is not, however, necessary to meditate on all of these circumstances as to every point, nor in the order in which they are here placed. All or some of them may be considered, and in the order which may be most convenient, without doing violence to the history or losing the relish which that history generally brings with it; and for this reason it is best to allow ourselves to be carried along the stream of the history, considering and weighing whatever circumstances may be most appropriate to it.

[2] Gal. ii. 20.

§ V.

The Affections which may be drawn from meditation on the Passion for the purpose of aiding the will.

In order to aid the will (which is the power towards which the whole of the meditation is directed) we ought to take note of the good and profitable affections which may be deduced from the consideration of the Passion, and to which our holy Father adverts in the third prelude of the Third Week, where he thus speaks—'The third point is to ask what I desire; and here it will be grief, affliction, and confusion, because, on account of my sins, our Lord goes to His Passion.' And on the fourth point he says—'The fourth is to consider what Christ our Lord suffers, or desires to suffer, in His Humanity, in accordance with that passage of the Passion which is under contemplation; and here to begin with great efforts and endeavours to rouse myself to sorrow and weeping, and in like manner to make effort as to the points which follow.' And on the sixth point he says—'The sixth is to consider how He suffered all these things for my sins, and what I ought to do and suffer for Him.' All these are the words of our holy Father. And in order to explain more fully this doctrine of his, and that he who prays may know what he ought to desire and aim at, and whither to direct his meditation, we may distinguish the following affections.

The first is of compassion; a feeling due in the highest degree to any one who suffers on our account. And it is much to be considered that as our Lord God chose to honour the death of His Son with the tears and lamentations of those women and holy matrons who accompanied and followed Him, so He has in like manner always maintained, and always maintains in His Church, even to this day, this spirit in certain

devout souls, who afflict themselves and bewail the Passion of the Lord as though they were present at it. And this the Prophet Zacharias seems to prophesy when he says, *Aspicient ad me quem confixerunt, et plangent eum planctu quasi super unigenitum: et dolebunt super eum, ut doleri solet in morte primogeniti: in die illa magnus erit planctus in Jerusalem*—'They shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve over the death of the firstborn. In that day there shall be a great lamentation in Jerusalem.'[1]

The second affection is abhorrence of sin, which was the principal cause which brought our Lord to death, and which made Him, the most beautiful among men, like unto a leper. 'His look,' says Isaias, 'was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins'—*Quasi absconditus vultus ejus et despectus, unde nec reputavimus eum. Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit: et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum et percussum a Deo et humiliatum: ipse autem vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter scelera nostra.*[2]

The third fear is of the divine justice; this fruit our Saviour Himself taught us to draw when, speaking to the women who followed Him, He said, *Filiæ Jerusalem, nolite flere super me; super vos ipsas flete et super filios vestros. . . . Quia si in viridi ligno hæc faciunt, in arido quid fiet?*—'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and your children. . . . For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?'[3]

The fourth is admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God, Who discovered and put into execution so suitable a means for His glory, for the satisfaction of His justice, for the demonstration of His mercy, for the healing of the world, and

[1] Zach. xii. 10. [2] Isaias liii. 4. [3] St. Luke xxiii. 28.

for the destruction of sin and of hell. All this was signified by our Saviour in these words, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?'[4] and in another place, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.'[5]

The fifth is hope, that He Who gave to us that which is greatest, will not deny us that which is less. This sentiment is frequently found in St. Paul, who teaches us to draw this fruit out of the Sacred Passion, founding the argument as well on God, Who bestows on us this blessing, as on ourselves, who are the recipients of it. Of the first he says, *Qui etiam proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit*—'He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?'[6] Of the second he says, *Si enim, cum inimici essemus, reconciliavit nos Deus per mortem Filii ejus, multo magis reconciliati salvi erimus in vita ipsius*—'If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.'[7] If, he says, the death of the Son of God had such power as to reconcile us to the Father when we were His enemies, much more shall we be saved by the virtue of this same Saviour, now living and arisen, since we are now friends, and reconciled to God. Which is as if he said, putting it in an elegant antithesis, if His death revived us when we were dead, much more shall His life save us now that we are alive. And to these two heads may be reduced the motives of hope which we may derive from the Sacred Passion.

The sixth affection is love towards Him Who has so loved us, and has bestowed such a benefit upon us. For in this precisely God enhanced His charity towards us, that being as we were sinners, Christ our Lord gave His life for us, *Commendat autem charitatem suam Deus in nobis, quoniam cum adhuc peccatores essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est.*[8]

The seventh is the imitation of the virtues which shone most brightly in the Passion of our Saviour, and this is the

[4] St. Luke xxiv. 26. [5] *Ibid.*
[6] Rom. viii. 32. [7] *Ibid.* v. 10. [8] *Ibid.* 8.

principal fruit of this exercise. Of it the Apostle Peter thus speaks, *Christus passus est pro nobis, relinquens exemplum sequamini vestigia ejus*—'Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps, Who when He was reviled did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not.'[9]

The eighth affection is the arming and defending ourselves against all temptation. For what else can so animate us to fight or aid us to conquer, what can so weaken our enemies and put them to flight, as the memory of the Passion? This point is referred to by St. Peter when he says, 'Christ, therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be ye also armed with the same thought'—*Christo igitur passo in carne et vos eadem cogitatione armamini.*[10]

The ninth fruit is zeal for souls, for no one who considers how God loved and esteemed souls, and what a price it has cost Him to redeem them, can ever cease to esteem and love them, and to put himself to any labour whatsoever for them. It was this consideration of which the Apostle Paul made use, when, to frighten those who scandalized their neighbours, 'Through you,' he says, 'shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?'—*Et peribit infirmus in tua scientia frater, propter quem Christus mortuus est?*[11] With this he animated himself to labour and suffer for the conversion of souls, seeing that he was carrying on what Christ had suffered for them, and supplying that which He could not now suffer because of His state of glory, and what He would suffer out of His immense charity if He were not in that state. *Et adimpleo ea quæ desunt passionum Christi, in carne mea, pro corpore ejus quod est Ecclesia*—'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body, which is the Church.'[12] And it is the same with all the preachers and ministers of the Gospel until the end of the world.

The tenth fruit which may be drawn from meditation on the Passion is the offering and dedicating of ourselves wholly

[9] 1 St. Peter ii. 21. [10] *Ibid.* iv. 1. [11] 1 Cor. viii. 11. [12] Coloss. i. 24.

to the service and will of Jesus Christ, with the deepest gratitude for so inestimable a benefit, even as slaves who have been bought at a great price. *Nemo enim nostrum sibi vivit, et nemo sibi moritur. Sive enim vivimus, Domino vivimus; sive morimur, Domino morimur. Sive ergo vivimus, sive morimur, Domini sumus. In hoc enim Christus mortuus est, et resurrexit, ut et mortuorum et vivorum dominetur*—'For none of us liveth to himself,' saith the Apostle, 'no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.'[13] And in another place he says, *Et pro omnibus mortuus est Christus, ut et qui vivunt jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est et resurrexit*—'And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again.'[14] Many other good affections may be drawn from meditations on the Passion of the Lord, but it is enough for our purpose to have touched on those mentioned above.

[13] Rom. xiv. 7. [14] 2 Cor. v. 15.

§ VI.

Of the Colloquy.

At the end of the meditation a colloquy ought to be made, speaking to Christ our Lord as though we had Him present to us in that same mystery on which we have been meditating, compassionating His sufferings, doing honour to His infinite charity, thanking Him for so great a benefit, representing to Him our necessities, begging of Him a remedy, accusing ourselves of having been, through our sins, the cause of His most bitter Passion, offering ourselves to do and suffer many things for our Lord, and finally praying for all those persons and all those affairs which have been commended to us.

From all this it follows that the field opened out to us in the meditation of the Sacred Passion is very large. For the whole of the history may be divided into many parts, and each part into many points, and in each point many different circumstances may be considered, and from the consideration of each of these different affections may be excited, and on each of these affections various colloquies may be made. And in this manner he who prays may give himself great scope, and occupy himself over and over again for much time in dwelling upon one single point or passage of the Passion. This is what we have thought fit to say briefly at present, in order to give some instruction and some form of meditation to those who desire to occupy themselves profitably in this exercise, putting off the rest to be treated more at large and of set purpose in its proper place. We shall now proceed to the main object of this treatise, which is that of writing the history of the Sacred Passion.

NOTE TO THE INTRODUCTION.

Father Jerome Nadal's Prelude to the Meditation on the Passion of Christ.

[THE following *Prelude*, from the pen of Father Jerome Nadal, one of the most famous early Fathers of the Society, is taken from Father Ciccolini's work on the *Exercises*, p. 693.]

As we have now come to the time when Christ begins to suffer and to pour out His Blood for the redemption of all of us mortals, it will not be amiss here to note in brief the things which may be of some use for these meditations, and may also be adapted to the other mysteries of our Lord. Who, then, is it that suffers? Who is it that is crucified? Who is it that dies? It is the Son of the Almighty God, Himself Almighty God, impassible, immortal, consubstantial with the Father—He it is Who suffers, Who in His Humanity is crucified, Who dies. Does, then, the Godhead suffer? or is it God in Himself that is crucified, or dies? None of these. Neither does the Godhead suffer, nor does God suffer in Himself. But the Word of God, on account of the personal union by which He is united to this individual humanity, receives and has applied to Himself these terms which express suffering. For as the Son of God was truly made Man, and as the result of this union is that He was truly Man in the unity of His Divine Person, so also does it result that He as man truly suffered, was crucified, and died—suffering nothing in His Divinity, nothing in the Word, but in the humanity and flesh which He had taken upon Himself.

When, then, the Man Jesus Christ was suffering, was He as He now is, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, of angels and men? Most certainly He was, as He now is. He was the brightness of the glory and the image of the substance of His Father, He was bearing all things by the word of His Power, He was the infinite Light, immense Power, in Him existed, in Him moved and lived, all things that moved and lived, He was the Beatitude and Glory of the angels, He was filling heaven and earth, He

was governing them all. But what was He according to His Humanity? The Humanity of Jesus Christ was a true humanity, composed of a rational soul and a body, both most perfect. It was the most excellent humanity of all that ever have been, or are, or shall be. It was united to the Word of God by hypostatic union, in the Person of the Son of God—not in its own. That human nature therefore subsisted in the Word, and hence the Man Jesus Christ was most truly God, the Son of God, the Word of the Eternal Father. And now, what most excellent grace was there and is there in Christ? The grace which we call the grace of Union, by which the Word of God was made Man, and by which the Word sustains in the unity of His own Divine Person that human nature of Christ.

What is there for us to contemplate in His Soul? The highest glory of Paradise, and also the highest grace. Christ, therefore, was in glory, and in all the delights of the heavenly Paradise while He was suffering. But by a miracle of God it was the case that that glory of Paradise did not overflow unto His body—nor upon His soul, so far as it was the form of the body, and so far as it operated by the forces of the body, and as to its lower part—and this was done in order that God might be able to suffer according to His Humanity. For unless God had restrained the glory of the soul of Christ, that glory would have made His body most glorious also, and would have made His soul blessed and happy in every part and respect, nor would the whole creation have been able to hurt that blessed humanity even in the least degree. Oh, how wonderful and admirable are the mysteries of our God! Oh, what condescension, worthy of the praises of all angels and men! Moreover, the effect of the grace of Jesus Christ was this, that not only was He Himself acceptable beyond all expression to God the Father, and all His actions and works most pleasing to Him, but also that through Him and through all His actions and works grace was distributed to all men, that all His virtues and all His gifts were communicated to all, and that, to crown all this, all who should receive His teaching and obey Him should obtain eternal glory through Him—for He was made to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation. For Christ 'is filled all in all,'[1] that is, He is all in His members, though not all in each, lest there should be no diversity of merit in them. And so, since for Himself Christ merited nothing, neither grace, nor glory, nor virtues, nor gifts—(for all these He received by the free bounty of God through the hypostatic union)—but only the glorification of His body, the exaltation of His name,

[1] Eph. i. 23.

His resurrection from the dead, and the like : yet for us He merited both those and these most abundantly and most efficaciously. But see how copious was the redemption of Jesus Christ ! From the very first moment of His conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, He merited all things both for Himself and for us by the application of His future Passion and death, and of all the works of His life, to the greater glory of God the Father, and He consummated that application by the whole of His life, and by His Passion and death. Again, Christ habitually saw in the Divine Word and in the Divine Essence all things that were possible to Himself and to His Father. The Soul of Christ saw, by means of created images, all things that were then, all things that had been, all things that were to be. He knew also who would believe and express their faith by good works, who were to fall away from the faith, who would persevere in grace, who would not, and who would be saved, and who would be damned. He offered His life, His Passion, and His death, sufficiently for all, and efficaciously for those alone who were the predestinated. For though He had paid the price for all, yet these last, above the rest, He held dear to Himself from all eternity and to all eternity. Besides this, Christ was far above all others most wonderfully adorned, beyond all the understanding of men or angels, with the highest excellence of every virtue, and this was the work of His Divine Person, of the hypostatic union, and of His most perfect grace and glory. From this again it resulted that He had neither faith nor hope, for the place of faith in Him had been taken from the first moment of His conception by a most surpassing sight of God and of all those things which are contained in faith. And hope had been also shut out from Him by an actual most beatific fruition of God—although there were some things which, on account of the dispensation of the Incarnation, Christ looked for and did not yet possess. And you must contemplate in Christ as He suffers, not only these things which I have named, but also His immense charity, fortitude, magnanimity, patience, humility, wisdom, and all His other consummate and most excellent virtues. And though all these things were so, and the Man Jesus Christ was in every respect most perfect, yet still He advanced in wisdom, and in age and in grace with God and man.[2] He learned obedience from those things which He suffered.[3] Certainly Jesus Christ advanced in age, and also in the practice and use of the virtues and gifts which He had received. He used His natural gifts, His intellect acted, His natural powers,

[2] St. Luke ii. 52. [3] Heb. v. 8.

and His will: He put in practice all the acts which could and ought to proceed from the faculties of nature, or from His supernatural gifts, according to the mission and command which He had received from His Father. So He is said truly to have advanced, not only before men, who saw Him day after day undertake greater and nobler works, but also before God. For those actions of Christ were a real advance before God, without which actions the end of the redemption of man would not have been reached; and although there was no increase of virtue and of merit in Christ by His meriting anything new, yet still that same redemption and that merit in Christ became more copious and more completely perfect. Is there anything else that may be of profit for the meditation on the Passion and death of Christ? Yes, if we consider not only those perfections of His which we have now glanced at, but also the natural perfections of His Humanity, that is, the excellence of His soul, and of His body, and all His powers, and all His senses, interior and exterior alike. Although the perfection which He had in Him was contained in the limits of humanity, yet it was very far higher than that of all other men beside Him, for these perfections were the perfections of that humanity which was hypostatically united to the Word of God, and they were also the organs of His Divinity.

From all that we have said hitherto it resulted that the Passion and death of Christ reached the utmost of indignity and pain, and on that account were most efficacious—far above anything that we can reach in thought or in word. But what did Christ suffer? and from whom? when, and on account of whom? What is the fruit of the Passion and death? What Christ suffered were the most bitter pains, both interior pains of the soul and exterior pains of the body. These interior pains of the soul He suffered from the very time of His conception, for He grieved vehemently and continually for all the offences and sins which had ever offended God, were then offending Him, or were thereafter to offend Him. For if it were true what St. Paul said of himself—'Who is weak and I am not weak, who is scandalized and I am not on fire?'[4] what may we not and ought we not to believe of Jesus Christ? The external pains of the body He began to bear, not only from the time of the Circumcision, but from that of His Birth, in tears, and cold, and want. Add to this His flight into Egypt, the abjection and humble state of His life before He began to preach the Gospel; add all the ignominies, reproaches, contumelies, He underwent. Thrice the devil took Him up high in the air; three times he tempted Him

[4] 2 Cor. xi. 29.

How often did not the Jews wish to stone Him? how often to lay hands on Him? Once even His own fellow-townsmen thrust Him forth, that they might cast Him headlong from their mountain. Consider how often He suffered cold, or heat, or hunger; how often He wept, how often He was destitute, and no one deigned to receive Him hospitably—Him Who moreover had not where to lay His head. Lastly, who can count up the multitude of pains which He suffered in the whole course of His Passion and death? Who can explain how bitter they were? Who can tell the infamy, the ignominy, the insult, the indignity of His death? But we shall have to speak of these things more particularly in their proper place; now let us pass lightly over the rest.

By whom was the Passion and death of Jesus Christ inflicted? If nothing else, it was inflicted by men whom He Who suffered it had created; whom He was continually sustaining in their substance, movements, life, and all other good things; for whom He became Man and mortal, and for whom He was suffering; whom He was embracing with immense charity; for whom He was purchasing everlasting life by His own most bitter death. All these things gave it the greatest indignity and sorrowfulness. But add to this, that it was at the hands of His own people that He suffered this most shameful death—men on whom He had conferred so many benefits, countless numbers of whom He had healed from sickness, raised from the dead, and communicated to them most graciously His heavenly doctrine. Those who laid hands on Him were the most abandoned ruffians, Gentiles and Jews, the offscouring of men. He was betrayed to death by a disciple; He was condemned by the envy and malice of the chief rulers; He was put to death on account of the ambition of the Governor.

But where did He suffer, where was He crucified? In the most famous city of the whole East (though outside the gate), the city which had been chosen of all others both by Him and by His Father, which they had adorned with endless benefits, where God had chosen that His Temple should be, and that there should be none anywhere else, in the one spot among men where He had planted His own religion and worship. He suffered in a place of that most famous city which was itself infamous and polluted, where, that is, criminals were put to an ignominious death, on the mount of Golgotha, that is Calvary, a place full of the bones and skulls of the condemned and of all uncleanness, even though that which is said to be perhaps true, and to be set down to a mystery, that the first of men, the great Adam, had there been buried. Consider

how in this place Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made a spectacle of utmost indignity, to angels—who had there assembled in great numbers or who were gazing from heaven upon their dying King—a spectacle of great delight to Lucifer, the prince of devils, and to the crowd of evil spirits, as many as God permitted to be there present—and to men a cruel sight indeed, on the one hand, to the few good, and on the other, a wished for sight to the multitude, the dregs of humanity, Jews and Gentiles. Open here awhile the eyes of your mind and mark the dispositions of each and their various feelings.

For whom did God die? For His enemies—that is to say, for all men, for those who were making Him undergo numberless pains, immense reproaches and, after all, the most bitter death. For all men were enemies to God the Father and to His Christ, for none of them did, no one could of himself, do what was good. For all Christ died, even for those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, that is, even if they had added no actual sin of their own, and had only contracted original sin. Again, He suffered for those who having been delivered through the Blood of Christ from the stain of original sin, had yet committed so many sins and crimes against God, were then committing such or were to commit such. And all these things enhanced indeed the ineffable charity of God and of Jesus Christ towards men, but they did not hinder the indignity and cruelty of the Passion from being greater, nor the ingratitude and injustice of those who slew Him from being more heinous.

And after all, what was the fruit of this so disgraceful and so bitter death? Great indeed was the fruit, great, and in every way most abundant. By the death of Christ the losses of the angels are repaired, Paradise is replenished, and the appointed number of those who are predestinated by God is filled up. These things are most true. But another thing also is undoubted—that far larger is the number of men for whom Christ died who yet have received no advantage from His death, on account of their own fault; men who have trodden under foot Jesus the Son of God and have esteemed the blood of His testament unclean[5] and have offered affront to the Spirit of grace. How many men perished before Christ came! And yet for them Christ died. How many while He was alive! Christ died for them. Hence again an increase of indignity in His Passion and death, hence also was the grief of Christ increased and made more vehement. For He saw numberless men who had received and were to receive no profit from His death, and so, in the case of many of them, even greater

[5] Heb. x. 29.

condemnation. And of those, too, to whom His death was to bring or had brought benefit and eternal salvation, how many did He see who either had sometimes offended against His death by mortal sins or were so to offend? And all these things made Christ conceive greater anguish and feel greater pain.

[These things are enough to be given by way of a short introduction, and yet nothing can be enough to be said for the fruitful meditation of the Passion of Christ. Let him who is to meditate turn these things over in his mind. But above all, if we drink in with tender piety of heart and keep ever present to us that which has been touched upon in the first place, namely, Who it is that suffers and that dies, we shall then reap very special fruit from the meditation of the Passion and death of Christ. Men use, some one set of annotations, others another, and in this matter let each 'abound in his own sense' with humility of heart and simplicity. But let them remember this, that when they find our Lord gives them spiritual devotion and fruit on any point, they had best make their exercise on that, and not easily divert their mind to other things. For my own part, I am accustomed to find it pleasant, in these meditations on the Passion of Christ, especially on the shedding of His Blood, to meditate on four heads. First, the infinite unseemliness and indignity of the thing, as we see the Son of God, Himself Almighty God, receiving wounds from the lowest and worst of men. Secondly, the intensity of the pain which He the God-Man suffered. Thirdly, the shedding of His Blood itself, which through the death of Christ brought forth life for me. Fourthly, if we meditate on what His most holy Virgin Mother suffered, whether as she meditated from a distance on what was being done, or whether she was there present and contemplated it. And as to this, we may piously believe that that benefit was not denied to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, which so many pious men and women have obtained from God's favour, that, though absent, they should be able to contemplate the mysteries of the Passion and death of Christ as if present to them. And lastly, I will add another thing, passing by many more. He who would meditate on the Passion and death of Christ, let him prepare himself for grief of soul, and for compassion with Christ, let him cast away from himself all pleasure and joy, that he may have in himself that mind and sentiment which was in Jesus Christ; and let him add two things more—to make thanksgiving for each one of the sorrows of Christ, and as he meditates those sorrows one by one, to ask for each some grace from God and Christ.]

Introduction to the History of the Sacred Passion

THE death and Passion by which our King and Saviour Jesus Christ brought His most holy life and glorious ministry to a close, to redeem thereby the whole human race from the miserable captivity of sin, and to give it the spiritual salvation of grace and eternal happiness and glory—these, from whatever side we look upon them, whether as to the Person Who suffers, or as to what He suffers, or as to the end for which He suffers, are the one most lofty and most divine and most secret mystery which has ever taken place in the world since God made it, or which ever shall be unto the end. And for the greater clearness of this history, it will be well to pass briefly in review the occasion taken by the Chief Priests and Pharisees to raise so great a tempest, and to decree in their council to put to so ignominious a death our Lord Christ, Whom, however they might choose to blind themselves to all the rest, they could not deny to have been a most illustrious prophet, and a very great benefactor to their whole nation. And at the same time we may note what our Lord did on each of the days of that last week of His life, which now, in memory of His most sacred death, we call Holy Week.

The miracle of the raising of Lazarus was so great, so evident, and so public, that the splendour of so much light brought to its final completion the blinding and hardening of the hearts of the Jews. For though many believed in consequence, others, full of envy and infernal fury, returned to Jerusalem[1] to relate

[1] St. John xi. 46.

and spread abroad what had taken place at Bethany. On this occasion the Chief Priests and Pharisees assembled in council, and, having deliberated together concerning the matter, resolved that it was necessary to provide some remedy by which to put a stop to the miracles which were being wrought by our Lord, because, if this were not done, it was certain that all the people would believe in Him, and then it would follow that the Romans would think that the nation was rising in rebellion against them, and would come with an army to destroy their Temple and their city.

Inspired by this fear, born of their covetousness and ambition, or perhaps desiring to give, by this zeal for the public good, some colour to the envy and hatred raging in their hearts, they could find no other means for preventing our Lord's miracles but that of taking away His life, and so they determined to put Him to death. And the Holy Spirit moved the infamous tongue of Caiaphas, on account of the office and dignity he held as High Priest, and so he brought to a formal resolution what had been discussed in the council, saying that it was expedient that one man should die, that so the whole nation might not perish. This sentence, understood as it ought to be understood, Caiaphas did not speak of his own head, but, being the High Priest of that year, he prophesied that Christ our Lord should die for the sins of His people, and not for that nation only, but that so He should gather into the Church the wandering sheep who were dispersed[2] among the Gentiles, that is, all who were predestinated to be sons of God. From the day of that council, therefore, they were determined to put Him to death, as being a Man Whose life was opposed to the public good,[3] and they gave a general commandment that all those who knew of Him should manifest Him, that He might be apprehended and the sentence be executed.

In all this, the blindness and perversity of these judges were discovered, seeing that they first pronounced the sentence and then proceeded to the trial. They pronounced the sentence of death in their council when our Lord was absent, without

[2] St. John xi. 52. [3] *Ibid.* 56.

taking His own statement or hearing His defence, moved only by envy of His miracles and fear of losing their temporal goods. And if afterwards in the course of His Passion He had accusers and witnesses against Him, and was questioned respecting His disciples and His doctrine, all was only colour and appearance, and to strain everything in order to make the trial proceed in accordance with the original sentence. Thus it frequently is with our own resolutions; they spring from passion or from crooked or vicious aims, and afterwards we endeavour to force our reason to range itself according to them.

Meanwhile our Saviour, knowing of the sentence and the command given by the Priests for His apprehension, and that any one of the people was obliged to make Him known as a public enemy, retired to the region near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem,[4] and there abode with His disciples during those days, to give place to the anger of His enemies, and to await the time of His death, which had been determined by the Eternal Father, and also that He might give us an example of taking a fit time and choosing an appropriate place to prepare ourselves to depart this life. Who shall say after what manner our Saviour spent those days in that city? What were the thoughts which passed through His mind when He was so near to death? What intercourse and converse did He hold with His disciples? And how great was their sorrow, and what the heavenly words with which they were instructed and animated by their Master?

The appointed time having now arrived, our Saviour left the desert and city of Ephrem to come to suffer and die at Jerusalem. And He did this with such great firmness and determination, so much fervour and readiness,[5] that on the road He went before all, so that the disciples themselves were astonished at the novelty.

During the course of the journey He took apart with Him the twelve disciples, and in secret and alone recounted to them the injuries and torments and death which were awaiting Him at Jerusalem. He also dismissed the petition of the mother of

[4] St. John xi. 54. [5] St. Mark x. 32.

the sons of Zebedee,[6] who claimed for them the two best places in the Kingdom of God. Then pursuing His way and arriving at the city of Jericho, He gave sight to a blind man, who made his petition to Him with a loud voice,[7] and entering the city He went as a guest to the house of Zaccheus,[8] inviting Himself and entering the doors of the same, a man who desired much to know Him, and was greatly anxious to entertain Him. There Jesus by His presence gave salvation to the whole house, and wrought the conversion of that great sinner and the chief of the Publicans. When our Lord left Jericho a great multitude followed Him,[9] and He healed two other blind men who were sitting by the wayside, and who, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, begging Him to have pity upon them. Thus our Saviour, when on the road to suffer and to die, went along where He had to pass doing works of mercy, opening the treasures of His power, shedding abroad the sweetness of His loving kindness, and giving signs and tokens of Who He was.

Pursuing then His journey after this manner, he came to Bethany six days before the Pasch, as St. John says.[10] As our Saviour had been ordinarily accustomed to take up His abode in that place, and as there were many there who knew and loved Him, and as on the other hand the memory of His great miracle of the raising of Lazarus was so fresh among them, they all desired to welcome and feast Him and show Him some mark of their gratitude. Our Saviour, therefore, tarried there on the day of His arrival, and a great supper was then made for Him in the house of Simon, one of the chief men, whose heart was full of love and gratitude to our Saviour, because He had cured him of his leprosy. Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, was one of those who sat at table with them Martha, the sister of Lazarus, served, and Mary Magdalene, taking a vase of most precious ointment, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair, and afterwards breaking the vase, she poured it over His head, so that the whole house

[6] St. Matt. xx. 20. [7] St. Luke xviii. 35. [8] St. Luke xix. 2.
[9] St. Matt. xx. 29. [10] St. John xii. 1.

was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Then Judas murmured, considering this to be wastefulness, and it would seem that the other disciples followed him. But our Saviour rebuked them with His accustomed loving kindness, praising the office which that woman had performed and showing that He had received with pleasure that honour and present, that it was a representation, and had reminded Him, of the day of His burial, which was so near at hand. On this occasion of our Saviour's arrival at Bethany, when it became known at Jerusalem that He was there, so great a multitude of people went thither, not only to behold Jesus, but also Lazarus after he had been raised from the dead, that the Princes and Priests persevering in their envy and blindness and in the vain fear which had entered their hearts, took counsel and resolution to put Lazarus also to death, because by reason of him many believed in our Saviour.

On the day following, which was Sunday, our Saviour left Bethany and came to Jerusalem,[11] whence they came to give Him that solemn reception with palm branches and made those honourable acclamations about the Son of David. All the multitude went about bearing witness to the power and majesty with which He had called Lazarus to come forth when he was in his grave, and this was the reason why they came forth to receive Him with so much pomp and such honourable and solemn ceremonies. And when He came within sight of the city, He was full of anguish and wept over it,[12] and predicted the heavy chastisement in store for it, because it had not exerted itself to profit by that present occasion and by the salvation and peace which were entering within its gates.

At the noise of this entrance and solemn reception of His the whole city was moved,[13] people saying one to another, 'Who is this?' In order not to omit His usual custom and to bestow largess, as became a King, Who had been received into the city as such, He went into the Temple and healed all the blind and lame who were there, at which the Chief Priests and the Scribes were so moved to displeasure that they could not any longer hide it, but reproached Him that He had permitted the

[11] St. John xii. 12. [12] St. Luke xix. 41. [13] St. Matt. xxi. 10.

children to proclaim Him the Son of David, and that He had not rebuked those who believed on Him by proclaiming Him aloud to be King of Israel.[14] But Jesus made no account of them, giving as a reason for not silencing the children in such a cause, that if they were to hold their peace the stones would cry out. And He listened with favour to the voices and acclamations of the children, seeing that it was written that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God had perfected praise. Then, after all this festivity, the hour being late, He viewed all things round about[15] and there being none to receive Him into their house or to invite Him to eat, He went back again out of the city and returned to Bethany with His disciples that night.

On the day following, which was Monday, He left Bethany in the morning to return to Jerusalem, and feeling hungry[16] He saw afar off a fig tree which was by the side of the road, full of leaves, and went to look if perhaps He might find anything on it to eat. But finding nothing there, He cursed it in the hearing of His disciples, saying, 'Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.' And then having come to the city, He entered into the Temple, and, full of zeal for the honour of His Father, He began to cast out those that sold and bought in the Temple, He overthrew the tables of the money changers and the places of them that sold doves, and set Himself with great force and authority[17] to hinder that any man should carry anything at all through the Temple. And although no one could resist the power and majesty with which He did this, nevertheless they conceived great anger and hatred against Him and sought means how they might take His life. For they feared Him because the whole multitude was in admiration at His doctrine.[18] And although it may be true that St. Matthew gives this history of the Temple immediately after[19] the entry of our Saviour with the procession of palms, yet St. Mark, who takes note of the day,[20] says that it was the day after, that is on Monday. And it being now evening[21] He went again out of the

[14] St. Luke xix. 13. [15] St. Mark xi. 11.
[16] *Ibid.* 13. [17] *Ibid.* 16. [18] *Ibid.* [19] St. Matt. xxi. 12.
[20] St. Mark xi. 15. [21] *Ibid.* 19.

city to the Mount of Olives, as was His[22] custom at night, and made His lodging at Bethany, which was on the slope of the hill and where He generally lodged.

The following day, which was Tuesday, He returned early in the morning into the city, and passing along the same path as the day before, the disciples came to see that the fig tree which our Saviour had cursed had withered away. The malediction pronounced by our Lord was no burst of anger, for that could not be in Him, nor was it a chastisement of the fig tree, for it was not deserving of it,[23] seeing that it was not the time for figs, nor could it feel chastisement; it was only a mystery and a representation of the Synagogue, which having so many leaves or ceremonies and outward show, had never brought forth the fruit which the Lord Who had planted it looked for from it, even when it was due season and it was bound to bear much fruit; therefore it received His curse and dried up so as not to bear any fruit for ever.

Our Saviour then came that day, which was Tuesday, to the Temple, and the Scribes and Pharisees and Priests and elders seeking Him out, He answered various questions which they put to Him, and convicted them by others which He put to them. Moreover, He preached to them in several parables that which had in mystery been acted on the fig tree, giving them to understand that they themselves were to be dried up and rejected, as may be seen in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of St. Matthew. And then He reproved them severely, and in clear and plain words, for their sins and abuses (as may be seen in the twenty-third chapter), and took leave of them with those forcible words in which the sentence of reprobation is so clearly pronounced against them: 'Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate'—*Ecce relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta*.[24] Which was as though He had said, Your Temple shall now be without inhabitant, because God will not abide in it henceforth, and it shall be thrown to the ground as a house which is deserted and with no dwellers therein. For verily I

[22] St. Luke xxi. 19. [23] St. Mark xi. 13.
[24] St. Matt. xxiii. 38.

say unto you, that from this time forth you shall see Me no more until you shall be constrained, whether you will or not, to confess Me as King, and shall cry out, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' This was to remit them, as it were, to the final Day of Judgment, when, from the severity of their chastisement and the penalties of their condemnation, they should recognize the greatness of His majesty. By this sentence of reprehension and of rejection, full as it was of sternness and truth, our Saviour put an end to His teaching, and left them and went out of the Temple, it being now the evening of Tuesday.

As our Saviour left the Temple in this resolute manner, and perhaps with signs of indignation against the hardness and obstinacy of the people, His disciples, who had seen all and had heard Him say that the Temple should be abandoned and that it would be destroyed, were moved to astonishment, or perhaps to pity and sorrow, and came gently up to Him and showed it to Him,[25] and made Him look at the greatness and majesty of the building and all its riches. But our Lord answered by affirming over again that all was to be destroyed, and that should not be left there one stone upon another. Then He passed on His way, and when He had seated Himself upon the Mount of Olives in view of the Temple and city, His disciples again came to Him and asked Him to tell them when those things should be, and what should be the signs of His last coming. On this it was that our Saviour foretold to them the Day of Judgment and what were to be the signs of that day, and all that is written in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew. He concluded His discourse by declaring to them[26] that after two days He should be crucified and die.

The Wednesday following, our Saviour would seem to have remained in Bethany the whole day, for we do not find that He returned to Jerusalem again until Thursday, when He went thither to celebrate the Pasch. On that day, or thereabouts, it must have been that the Chief Priests and elders of

[25] St. Matt. xxiv. 1. [26] *Ibid.* xxvi. 2.

the people, irritated by the rebukes which had been addressed to them the previous day, gathered together once more in the palace of the High Priest, to hold that council against our Lord of which St. Matthew speaks,[27] and having already decreed in their first council to put Him to death, they resolved on this occasion upon two other things. The first, as to the manner of doing this—that is that He should be taken by craft and treachery. The second, as to the time—that it should be put off until after the Passover, and this not from any zeal for religion, but from fear lest, as so large a multitude was to be assembled at Jerusalem of people who knew and revered our Saviour and had received many benefits from Him, there might perhaps arise some tumult and revolt which might rescue their prisoner out of their hands and defeat their design. Such, then, was the result of this meeting, which having taken place on Wednesday, the Church in ancient times fasted on that day, as says St. Augustine;[28] and it seems a mystery that the Evangelist remarks that at the very time when our Saviour was foretelling to His disciples that He should be crucified on the solemn day of the feast, the Chief Priests were decreeing in their council that His death should not be on the day of the feast. For thus we see how the time and place and circumstances of the Passion were all of them decreed in the divine counsels, which prevailed against the councils of men. The reasons occasioning them to change their intention may have been, as it seems, the following.

Judas was in a state of indignation and evil temptation against our Saviour and His doctrine, and hearing that the Chief Priests and Pharisees were endeavouring in their councils to devise some means whereby they might take Him and put Him to death without causing an uproar among the people, he wished not to let the opportunity pass, and so went to them and offered, if they would pay him well, to deliver Him up and place Him in their hands. They thought their end was now gained by means of the good offices of Judas, and agreed with him as to the price they should give him, and from that time forth Judas

[27] xxvi. 3. [28] Epist. 86.

set himself to seek to betray Him to them privately and without any tumult.[29] From which it is to be inferred that Judas did not make this contract the night itself of the Last Supper, but a day or two beforehand, during which time he was seeking for an occasion to deliver his Lord into their hands. Nor, on the other hand, does it appear that the contract was made before the council, because if this had been the case, the Chief Priests would not have consulted together as to the manner they must have recourse to in order to take Jesus by craft. The opinion most commonly entertained seems therefore the most probable, that Judas, being aware of what was discussed in the council, went to them and gave them the means which they sought, thinking the thirst and eagerness which they felt to buy Him a good occasion for himself to sell Him, and that on this account he said to them, 'What will you give me?'—*Quid vultis mihi dare?* As if he had said, 'If you so greatly desire to have Him in your hands without a disturbance being made and by craft, what will you give me? and I will deliver Him to you and accomplish your wishes.'

The Chief Priests were glad[30] of so good an opportunity of carrying out their evil designs, and in order not to lose it, determined to execute their fury on the first and most solemn day of the festival itself, and contrary to what they had decided upon in the council. Nor is it to be wondered at that people so superstitious as they should nevertheless keep that festival so badly, since on other occasions also, as on the Feast of Tabernacles,[31] and of that of the Dedication[32] or Restoration of the Temple, they had sought to take Him and to stone Him. For as they were blind enough to seek the death of one so Holy and Innocent, it was not much for them to be so blind as to break the festival. As, moreover, they might seek to give some colour to this wickedness of theirs, by looking upon our Saviour as a man so blasphemous and sacrilegious that it would seem to them to be for the honour of God and for the maintenance of the law that He should be crucified upon the festival, seeing

[29] St. Matt. xxvi. 16. [30] St. Mark xiv. 11; St. Luke xxii. 5.
[31] St. John vii. 2, 30. [32] *Ibid.* x. 31, 39.

that He was Himself, as they stated, a breaker of festivals. Finally, they had no other reason for delaying to crucify Him on the day of the feast, except the fear they had that a tumult should arise amongst the people, and now that there was no longer any fear of such an inconvenience, through the means offered to them by Judas, they changed their plan, and determined not to keep the feast badly by leaving our Lord alive upon it.

Thursday morning dawned, it being that year the fourteenth day of the first moon of March. On this day, two solemnities occurred together. The first was the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, with all the proper ceremonies;[33] which it was ordained should take place on the fourteenth day of the moon in the evening. It was, therefore, to be celebrated that year on Thursday in the afternoon before sunset. The second solemnity was what is termed the Feast of the Azymes,[34] which lasted for seven days, therefore, from the fifteenth of the moon until the twenty-first (both included). The first day of this feast, which was most solemn, began on the evening of Thursday, according to the custom of the Jews, who celebrated their feasts from the evening of one day until that of the next following. Hence we can understand the various modes of speaking of the different Evangelists. For St. John says[35] that our Saviour celebrated the Last Supper and washed the feet of His disciples the day before the Festival of the Pasch, meaning by the day of the festival, or the solemn day of the Pasch, the Friday which was the first of the Azymes. The other three Evangelists[36] say that it was on the first day of the Feast of Azymes that the Saviour sent two of His disciples to prepare a place where the Pasch might be celebrated, and by the first day of the Feast of Azymes, or Unleavened Bread, they mean the Thursday, because on that night they began to eat the unleavened bread with the sacrifice of the Lamb.

According to this, it was, then, on this morning of Thursday that our Saviour sent two of His Apostles from Bethany to

[33] Exodus xii. 6. [34] *Ibid.* 18. [35] St. John xiii. 1.
[36] St. Matt. xxvi. 17; St. Mark xiv. 12; St. Luke xxii 7.

Jerusalem, with certain tokens to guide them, to prepare the place where the Pasch was to be celebrated, to which place He afterwards came with all His disciples, and in the evening at the hour appointed He celebrated the sacrifice of the Lamb with all the ceremonies which the Law enjoined. The usual and ordinary supper followed, then the washing of the feet, the institution of the most Holy Sacrament, and all the rest in order until He was taken and brought before the High Priest.

On Friday continued the whole process of the Passion until our Saviour was crucified and died upon the Cross at the ninth hour. That Friday is called by St. John,[37] *Parasceve Paschæ:* the same term being given to it by St. Mark,[38] *Parasceve, quod est ante Sabbatum* (the Parasceve, that is the day before the Sabbath). Parasceve signifying the same thing as preparation. For as it was not lawful on the Sabbath to dress meats or even to light fires, God commanded them[39] that they should dress the meats for the Sabbath on the Friday therefore, and thus the Friday was termed the *Parasceve, quod est ante Sabbatum.* And because this Sabbath fell within the seven days of the Pasch, St. John says that it was a great day,[40] that is, that Sabbath day was particularly great, because it was not only the Sabbath, but also one of the days of the Pasch, and because of the multitude of strangers who had come to the Pasch and who were detained in Jerusalem, not being able to return on the Sabbath day to their homes, and therefore that Sabbath day was so very great and solemn.

For all these reasons, as St. John says,[41] the Jews were in great haste to put an end to the lives of those who were crucified, so that before the Sabbath began they might take the bodies down from the cross and give them burial, thinking, perhaps, that it would not be lawful to do this on a Sabbath day, on which day many more works were forbidden to them than on other feast days—especially when they were able to anticipate them; and it being also commanded in the Law[42] that the bodies of those who had been executed should be

[37] xix. 14 [38] xv. 42. [39] Exodus xvi. 22, 23.
[40] xix. 31. [41] xix. 41. [42] Deut. xxi. 23.

taken down from the cross and be buried the same day. In accordance with this, on that same Friday our Saviour was taken down from the Cross in the evening and buried.

On the Sabbath, the disciples and the holy women who had accompanied our Saviour remained quiet in retirement, according to the commandment.[43] And when the Sabbath was past,[44] which would be in the evening after sunset, they went out to buy aromatic ointment that they might then go early in the morning to the sepulchre to anoint the Body of Jesus.

This, then, is the order of the events which passed during that week, which we call Holy; and this is what it seemed necessary to premise in order to make intelligible some difficulties in the history of the Sacred Passion, which we shall now begin to recount, dwelling on the points on which it may seem that we may insist with most profit in meditation, beginning from the contract made by Judas, which, as we have said above, most probably took place on the Wednesday, when the Priests were holding their second council at Jerusalem concerning our Saviour's death.

[43] St Luke xxiii. 56. [44] St. Mark xvi. 1.

THE HISTORY
OF
THE SACRED PASSION.

CHAPTER I.

The Council against our Saviour and His betrayal by Judas.

As it was to be that our Master and Redeemer Jesus Christ should offer Himself to death because He chose, and as no violence placed Him on the Cross, but only His own free and loving will, so, the nearer the time approached, the nearer also He drew to the place of His Passion and death. Having made His solemn entry with the Procession of Palms into Jerusalem, and gone to and fro several times between Bethany and the Temple in those days which followed, having ended all His discourses, and thus fulfilled His office of Teacher, and being now about to begin to discharge His office of Redeemer, as a conclusion to all His doctrine He clearly and openly warned His disciples of the day, now so near, of His ignominious and bitter Passion.[1] 'You know,' He said to them, 'that after two days shall be the solemn festival of the Pasch, and now I give you to know that on that same day I am to be delivered up into the hands of the Jews and Gentiles, who will put Me to death upon a cross.'

The Chief Priests, who were full of envy and passion, and had been irritated by the reproval of their vices which our Saviour had publicly uttered the day before with so great firmness and truth, assembled in council against Him[2] in the house of the High Priest who was called Caiaphas, and there determined upon two things. First, that it was expedient to seize Him by cunning and craft, and without violence or publicity. Secondly, that this should be put off until after the Pasch, and this, not from zeal for religion or the reverence which was due

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 2. [2] *Ibid.* 3.

to the festival, but only on account of the fear which they entertained, that as so many people had to assemble in Jerusalem who knew and esteemed and had received benefits from our Saviour, these might raise a tumult or commotion, by means of which their prisoner would be rescued from their hands and their evil intents be brought to nought. But the very reverse of all that which they had determined was what they did. For they put our Saviour to death on the day of the Festival and His capture was made with violence and by armed force. From which we see how weak are the counsels of man, and that they cannot prevail against the counsels of God. The reason of the change appears to have been this. Judas was full of indignation and evil temptation against our Saviour and against the doctrine which He taught. The perdition of this unhappy and miserable apostate began from his covetousness, because having charge of the alms which were given to our Saviour, he used to steal this money for his own purposes.[3] And then, being overcome and mastered by this passion, he began to care less, and by little and little to conceive hatred and abhorence, for the doctrine and person of our Redeemer, Who taught so uncompromisingly the love of poverty and condemned the coveting of temporal riches.

Going on further and further thus, Judas at last so hardened his heart, that in his unwillingness to look into his own conscience or lay to his own charge his own state of misery, he laid it all upon our Saviour, censuring and murmuring at all He did or said. At last he came no longer to believe in Him, but looked upon His doctrine as imposture and on His miracles as fictitious, and he did harm by his words and example to all those who listened to and who followed our Saviour. For, on the occasion of that most sublime discourse which He delivered to His disciples,[4] wherein He promised them that He would give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, Judas must have been the chief among those who murmured, exclaiming, 'This saying is hard and who can bear it?'[5] Most probably, too, he was at the head of that movement of revolt which was

[3] St. John xii. 6. [4] *Ibid.* vi. [5] *Ibid.* 16.

the reason why so many of the disciples 'went back and walked no more with our Saviour.'[6] For amongst other things said by our Lord on that occasion was this, that 'there are some amongst you My followers who believe not!'[7] and the Evangelist tells us that our Saviour said this because He knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that should betray Him. And as Judas nevertheless still dissembled and remained among the Apostles, yet our Lord, seeing and knowing that his heart was so bad and that he had as little faith as those who had gone away, in order to correct him with all respect and in secret, said to all the twelve Apostles together, 'Will you also go away?' Then St. Peter, imagining that all the rest had the same good heart as himself, answered in the name of them all, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' But our Saviour, Who knew well whom He had in His company of disciples, answered, with an allusion to Judas, and to give him an occasion to move himself to compunction if he had not been so hardened, replied, 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' The Evangelist says that He meant this for Judas, who was to betray Him, being one of the twelve. This devil then did our Saviour bear with for so long a time and treat with so much gentleness and patience, so much honour and such observance of secrecy, until he delivered Him in very deed into the hands of His enemies.

Another circumstance took place during these days which led Judas to put the crown to his irritation and made him fall headlong into the depths of perdition. For six days before the Pasch, Jesus came to Bethany,[8] where He had lately raised Lazarus to life, and the remembrance of that wonderful miracle being still fresh, all were desirous to feast Him and do Him honour, and to show Him some token of their gratitude. On this account they made Him a supper, at which Lazarus who had been raised from the dead was one of the guests who sat at the table, for greater evidence of the miracle and greater

[6] St. John vi. 67. [7] *Ibid.* 65. [8] *Ibid.* xii. 1.

honour to our Saviour, Who had wrought it, causing so much wonder and awe in all, that people came to Bethany from Jerusalem in great numbers only to see Lazarus.[9]

The two sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary (at whose entreaty the Lord had raised their brother to life), were present at this supper, with hearts overflowing with fervour, with love, and with gratitude, and displaying in the best way they could the feelings with which they were animated towards our Lord. For Martha, being a lady of quality, and being in another person's house, that of Simon the leper, would not have any one take from her the office she had been accustomed to discharge in her own house, and so served in her own person at the table,[10], brought in the food, made it into portions, and served it, and with the utmost joy and devotion occupied herself in waiting upon our Saviour.

But Mary Magdalene, who had kept all the luxuries of her past life that she might therewith serve and make presents to our Lord, had amongst them a vessel of most sweet liquid ointment, of great value and cost, being made of precious spikenard.[11] Nor was it small in quantity, for it amounted to a whole pound's weight ;[12] and, in short, it was such that to Judas it seemed great waste and superfluity to pour it out. But holy Magdalene, who had far different esteem of our Lord from Judas, thought it a very little thing to employ it in His service, and so coming into the chamber and falling down at His feet, she anointed them with a portion of the ointment, and then wiped them with her hair, and we may well believe that she kissed them many times with great love and reverence. Then she rose, and to show still more the greatness of her love, and also how little it seemed to her to pour out such precious ointment, if so be she might thereby serve and honour our Lord, that there might not remain one drop of it, she broke the vase, which was of alabaster,[13] and let the whole of the remainder fall upon His head. And so fine was it that the whole house was filled with that sweet odour, and until this day the whole

[9] St. John xii. 9. [10] *Ibid.* 2. [11] St. Mark xiv. 3.
[12] St. John xiii. 3. [13] St. Matt. xxvi. 7.

Church is full of the fragrance of the example of her so great devotion and charity.

Our Saviour accepted with loving condescension the service of Magdalene, not for the sake of the pleasure or delight which His Body might feel at that anointing, for as He had offered His feet and His hands to the nails, and His head to the thorns, He did not seek nor desire to regale Himself with the fragrance of sweet ointments. But He was much pleased with this service for the spirit and devotion of her who paid it, and also on account of the fitting time and season at which she did this. The soul of Mary Magdalene was all inflamed with love, for if when she first went into the house of the Pharisee to weep over and entreat forgiveness of her sins, she was moved and drawn by love, as our Lord Himself testified of her, how greatly must her love now have increased, after she had witnessed His miracles with so great admiration, had heard with so much delight and calmness of spirit His discourses, and had received benefits from Him in such abundance? The time at which she performed this work was so near to the death of our Saviour, that the ointment might, as it were, serve for that with which He was to be buried, in accordance with the custom of that people, and so our Lord, wishing it to be understood not so much that He had permitted Himself to be anointed as a living person, as that He had allowed Himself to be embalmed as if He were already dead, with very great courtesy took the part of that devout woman with His Apostles, and said, 'Why do you trouble this woman with your false charges and murmurings? for she hath well done what she hath done to Me; she has been beforehand in anointing My body for My burial. Amen I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, together with what I have done and suffered for men, that also which she hath done shall be proclaimed, that she may be praised and honoured for it.'[14]

Judas was present at all this, and though he had so much reason to praise the devotion of Mary and to rejoice at the honour and pleasure done to his Master, yet he took it as a

[14] St. Matt. xxvi. 10.

great grievance that the ointment had been poured out, giving as a reason[15] that it was very valuable, and that with its price the necessities of the poor might have been relieved. But in truth he cared very little for the relief of the poor, but he was a thief, and kept a purse of his own as one who had his own property, and stole what was given to our Saviour, and so he desired that that alms should be turned into money. Then—such is the effect of bad example—it seems that the other Apostles took part as well as he in this fault-finding, moved thereto by the reason which Judas had given in favour of the poor, although not with the malice with which he spoke. And they carried on in ignorance and delusion—as so often happens—the fault-finding which he had begun in malice and passion.

Judas, then, being in this state of mind, remained with his body only among the Apostles, while his heart was with the Pharisees, the enemies of Christ. Having left the supper at Bethany with great irritation, and hearing, on the other hand, the storm which was being raised against our Lord, and that His enemies were seeking for Him that they might put Him to death, he began to fear lest some part of all this trouble might fall upon himself, and that he might be treated as one of His disciples. So he determined to save himself and gain at one throw both friends and money. Knowing, moreover, that the Chief Priests were taking counsel together, and were searching for means whereby to seize our Saviour by deceit, this false and dissembling traitor, overmastered by the devil, made his way to them, and confirmed them (as is most probable) in their intentions, by giving testimony as one who had lived and conversed with our Lord, that He was indeed worthy of the death which they were contriving, and offering them his services, promising to place Jesus in their hands if they would give him a reward for so doing.[16]

The Chief Priests greatly rejoiced[17] to have in their own favour the testimony of Judas, and fixed as the price they would give him for his good services thirty pieces of silver. And

[15] St. John xii. 5. [16] St. Matt. xxvi. 15.
[17] St. Mark xiv. 11; St. Luke xxii. 5.

he, vile and mean as he was, thought this was a good price at which to sell to them the Lord of Majesty. He had been traitor to God, to justice and to truth, but he took pains to keep faith with the enemies of God and of justice and of truth. From henceforth, therefore, he sought with much carefulness to find an opportunity of performing the promise he had made to them.

CHAPTER II.

Our Saviour eats the Paschal Lamb with His Disciples.

The morning of Thursday now arrived, which was the first day of the Azymes, or of Unleavened Bread. Our Saviour was either at Bethany (where He had tarried the preceding day) or on His way to Jerusalem, when, before they entered the city, His disciples began to speak to Him[1] as to where He desired that they should prepare what was necessary for the celebration of the Pasch, since it was now so near at hand. Our Saviour, to show that He had not forgotten the matter, but that His Divine Wisdom understood all things, and directed and guided them by His Providence, called to Him two of His Apostles,[2] St. Peter and St. John, and said unto them, 'Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in, and give the owner this message from Me: The Master sends to tell thee, the time which I have determined and marked for My death is near at hand; this is to be My last Pasch and My last Supper, and I have determined to make it in thy house with My disciples. And when you have thus spoken to him, he will show you a large room well furnished, and there you may prepare the Pasch.' The two disciples went, and everything

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 17. [2] St. Luke xxii. 8.

took place exactly as our Saviour had said. Then they prepared all which was requisite in the house of that most favoured man, to whom our Lord sent so precious a message, asking for his house that He might celebrate therein mysteries so sublime.

Our Saviour then entered the city, and with all His company repaired to the house of His host, who was awaiting His presence. The Paschal Lamb was ready, together with the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the staves, and the other requisites for celebrating the Pasch. When the proper time had arrived, our Saviour prepared Himself to perform the ceremony. They sacrificed the lamb, they sprinkled with its blood the doorposts of the house, and roasted the lamb in the fire. Then our Saviour put shoes on His feet, and girded up His robe, took a staff in His hand, and stood at the table, with His Apostles in like dress and guise as Himself. Then they began to eat the lamb with the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, eating in haste and as though they were on a journey. For all this was done in memory of the passage from Egypt, and of the temporal liberty given by God to that people of the Jews, which was a symbol of the spiritual liberty from the slavery of sin and of the devil which we are to gain by virtue of the Blood of Jesus Christ, Who now with great constancy and magnanimity was beginning His Passion by this symbol and representation thereof.

This ceremony being concluded, they laid aside the staves, and sat down to eat the common and ordinary supper, at which our Saviour, with the greatest meekness and tenderness and manifestation of love began to feast with His Apostles. He told them[3] how much He had desired to sup with them that time before His death, and to have them as His guests at that Pasch. 'With desire,' said He, 'I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before My Passion,' giving them to understand from the strength and greatness of His desire that the mysteries which were to be wrought at that Supper for the good of the whole Church were so great that it was meet and due that the desire, and the very great desires, of the Son of God should be

[3] St. Luke xxii. 15.

occupied with them. He also told them that that supper would be the last which He would eat with them in His mortal flesh until they should be united to Him in the feasts of Heaven, where He would fully supply all their desires, and give them perfect satiety. 'For you are they,' He said,[4] 'who have been My faithful friends and companions, who have continued with Me and have not forsaken Me in all My travails and temptations, and I consequently must make you the companions of My rest and My glory; and I will give you a portion in the Kingdom which My Father has given to Me, that you may sit at My Table and eat of that spiritual food which gives satiety, and be filled with the torrents of the delights of God.' All this the Saviour said to console His disciples, who were being left as orphans, promising them a great and very rich heritage by means of His death.

Judas was amongst them, his countenance hiding from them all the wickedness and treachery of his heart. And our Saviour, with ineffable gentleness, ate at the same table and at the same dish with a man of whom He knew that he had gone to the Chief Priests and was treating with them to betray Him, that he had already concluded the bargain and fixed the price, nay, that he was then thinking of nothing else but how to find a good opportunity for delivering Him into their hands. And then to show that He well knew and understood all this, and that He suffered of His own freewill, and also in order to touch the heart of Judas, and give him an opportunity of entering into himself, seeing that his secret was known, our Lord, among the other words which He spake at that Supper, lovingly complained of this, saying,[5] 'Amen, Amen, I say unto you that one of you is about to betray Me, and has conspired with My enemies against Me.' On hearing these words, they all of them began to be very sorrowful and to cast troubled glances at one another, but much more did each one look into his own conscience, to see whether in himself or in the others he could discern any traces of such treachery. And although their

[4] St. Luke xxii. 28.

[5] St. Matt. xxvi. 21; St. Mark xiv. 18; St. Luke xxii. 21.

consciences did not reproach them, they began to say to Him humbly one by one, 'Lord, can it be I?' moved as they were by holy fear, and desiring to satisfy themselves and one another by the answer of our Lord.

Amidst these discourses the Supper proceeded, and of the thirteen who were seated at the table, three or four, as was the custom, ate out of one dish. The Apostles still pressed our Saviour to declare who amongst them was the traitor, and thereby free those who were innocent from so terrible a fear and suspicion; but He, desiring rather to reclaim Judas than to defame him, did not choose to discover altogether the secret, lest the stigma set upon him and the hatred of his brother disciples should cause that unfortunate wretch altogether to lose courage and to despair. Still, in order to show more fully the enormity of the matter, and to give some more particular mark to those who were questioning Him, He answered,[6] 'Amen I say to you, that he who is to sell Me is not only seated at the table with Me, but he eats of the same dish with Me; and true it is that by this path the Son of Man (that is I) goes to His death, and the shameful death of the Cross; nevertheless He goes of His own freewill, and in order to obey His Father and for the redemption of all the world, and to obtain by means of death great glory and a name above every name, as all the Scriptures affirm and testify. But woe to him who is to betray the Son of Man to death! for although at present he may seem to triumph and to gain friends and money, yet of a truth he is going to perdition and death and to eternal torments, so great and grievous, that it had been better for him had he never been born.'

Judas, seeing that it was he who was signified, and that the sign of eating from the same dish applied to himself, was so irritated by these last words, which were words of menace, that he turned round like a serpent, and with an angry countenance and harsh voice, and with as little of shame on his face as he had of the fear of God in his heart, looked upon our Saviour with rolling and flaming eyes, and asked,[7] 'Is it I, Rabbi?'

[6] St. Matt. xxvi. 23. [7] *Ibid.* 25.

And our Saviour, with infinite consideration and gentleness, and as it would seem with lowered voice, since the rest did not understand it, answered him, 'Thou hast said.'[8] Which reply, after the manner of speaking in the Hebrew tongue, was the same as to tell him plainly that so it was.

CHAPTER III.

Our Saviour washes the feet of His Disciples.

The night before the solemn festival having now come, and Jesus, knowing that His hour had arrived, and that this was the day on which through death He should pass from this world to His Father, although He had always felt and shown great love for His own who were in this world. He desired nevertheless, at the end of His life, to give them still greater signs and proofs of the love He bore them. For this reason, when that common and ordinary supper was ended, and Judas had resolved, at the instigation of the devil, to betray Him, Jesus—being such as He was, and so great, being in truth the only-begotten Son of God, in Whose hands the Father had placed all things, and being now to return to His Father Who had sent Him—in order to give us an example of humility, and to show the tenderness of His love, performed a work so entirely new and unthought of as we shall now see it to have been. For He arose from table, and commanded the Apostles to rise also, and to seat themselves in the order and manner most suitable for the act He was about to perform. And having done this, He laid aside His upper garment, remaining with His under vestment only, and taking a cloth or towel, girded

[8] St. Matt. xxvi. 25.

Himself with it. After this He poured water into a bason, and kneeling on the ground, began to wash the feet of His disciples.

In this manner He gave them not only an example of humility, but a manifest token and pledge of His love, for love never disdains to perform any office, however low it may be, towards those whom it loves. And our Saviour performed this office, low and servile as it was, with as much joy, and did it as thoroughly, and with as much perfection, as though He had had no other occupation during the whole of His life. For He performed it entirely Himself, without the aid of any, nor did He disdain to rise from table and to take off His garment and to gird Himself with a towel—He Who, being the Son of God, had deigned to become Man, and humbled and emptied Himself,[1] taking on Him the form of a servant—nor did He think it unbecoming there, with the table and victuals around, to handle the unclean feet of the Apostles, He Who so loved us as to shed His Blood to cleanse us from the filth of our sins.

Our Saviour began this service with Simon Peter, to whom in all things He was wont to give the first place as to the head of the Apostles. For with the head it is reasonable that purification and cleansing and reformation of manners should begin. But when St. Peter saw a thing so new and astounding, he exclaimed, with all his accustomed fervour and impetuosity—'Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Thou, my feet? Who art Thou and who am I?' This is a thing, as St. Augustine says upon this place, rather to think of than to speak of, for perhaps the tongue could not avail to express what the mind strives to conceive concerning these words.

Jesus our Lord did not desist from His intention on account of this reverent resistance on the part of the Apostle Peter, for although it sprang from reverence and humility, it was nevertheless founded on ignorance of the reasons and the ends that He had in view in performing this office. For He not only wished to give them thereby an example of humility and a mark of His charity, but also to teach them by this ceremony

[1] Philip. ii. 6.

how necessary is interior purity of soul to the reception of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, which He was about in a very short time to give them, and also that it was impossible to attain to this purity unless He bestowed it on them by washing them in His own Blood; that, moreover, without this washing, they could have no part in Him nor with Him. All this our Saviour wished to teach St. Peter by that symbol and figure of the washing of the feet, and He took occasion so to teach from the opposition offered to Him by the Apostle, who looked only to what was becoming, and not at all beyond what was seen externally in that action. And so Jesus addressed him thus—'What I do thou knowest not now; I have many and sufficient reasons, and if thou knewest them, thou wouldst not attempt to hinder Me, but as thou knowest them not, thou makest this resistance; let Me then wash thee as I desire, for in due time thou wilt understand it all.' Nevertheless, St. Peter persisted in his obstinacy, thinking, perhaps, that the reasons for doing that office of which our Saviour spoke were only to give them that example of humility. And he would not allow such an example to be made with his own feet, and so he answered resolutely—'Thou shalt never wash my feet, either now or at any time; I will not consent to it; it shall never come to pass; I will never allow that Thou shalt wash my feet.'

Our Lord, seeing the obstinancy of St. Peter, and that he would not submit to have his feet washed with water by Him Who was about to wash away all our sins in His Blood, answered with equal firmness—'If I wash thee not thou wilt have no part with Me;' as though He had said—'Do not attempt, Peter, to hinder Me in this service of washing away the stains and soils of men, for no one can do it save Myself, Who am come into the world[2] not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give My life for the redemption of all men. Nor do thou seek to show Me courtesy to thine own prejudice, but permit yourself to be washed and to enjoy this benefit, for if I wash you not you may give up My friendship, and look on yourself as one who has nothing to do with Me.'

[2] St. Matt. xx. 28.

But as this obstinacy of the Apostle did not proceed from hardness and disobedience, but rather from reverence and humility, so, when he saw that it imported him much that he should allow himself to be washed, and heard the threat with which our Lord menaced him, he offered, not his feet only, but his hands and his head to be washed, as if to say, as St. Augustine says[3]—'Since Thou threatenest me thus, not only do I entreat that Thou wouldst wash the lowest part of my body, such as my feet, but I offer Thee also the highest portion, which is my head; and as Thou dost not refuse to let me have part in Thee, no more will I refuse to Thee that Thou shouldst wash any part of me whatever.' 'He that is washed,' said our Saviour, 'needeth not to wash more than his feet, since for the rest he is already wholly clean,' showing thereby that neither must he refuse to have his feet, which were soiled, washed, nor on the other hand, need he offer his head and his hands, which were clean. For this is what is wont to happen, that after a man has been cleaned and washed, on getting out of the bath some dust or dirt clings to his feet, on account of which he washes them once more. So, in the same manner, after one has been cleansed from grievous and mortal sin, there often clings to him the dust of venial sins. Thus it is well for him to wash his feet, and to purify himself more and more, as much as possible, before receiving the Divine Sacrament. And as our Lord's Heart was pierced as by a thorn by the perdition of Judas, He would not allow any opportunity of showing this feeling, and of rousing him to enter into himself, to pass, and so He took occasion from what He was saying to give him as it were a passing blow, saying—'That which happens to a man who having his whole body clean, has his feet soiled, the same has been your case, for in truth you are clean, but not all.' Because He knew well who of them was to betray Him, He said they were not all clean. St. Peter, overcome by these words, allowed his feet to be washed, and so afterwards did the rest in their order, none venturing to offer any contradiction or resistance after having heard what our Lord had answered

[3] Tract xxxvi. on St. John.

to St. Peter. And as our Lord desired to charge this benefit which He had bestowed upon them with this condition, that we should do to our brethren what He has done to us, we ought to pay great attention to that which He did, in order to know what we ought to do, and consider in this action of His the silence, the humility, the joyful countenance, the diligence, and the modesty of our Saviour, and also, on the other hand, the devotion and reverence, the submission and wonder of the Apostles, the vexation, disdain, and rudeness with which Judas allowed himself to be washed, and the meekness, patience, and charity with which our Saviour placed Himself at his feet.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Lord institutes the most holy Sacrament, and declares to St. John who is His betrayer.

THE hour had now come when Jesus Christ our Lord, the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchisedech, was to offer His Body and Blood as a true sacrifice to appease the anger of God, and to reconcile the whole world to Him. He willed that this self same Body and Blood, which He was to offer upon the Cross, should remain perpetually in the Church under the species of bread and wine, that it might be the pure Sacrifice and acceptable Victim of the law of grace, and also a most excellent Sacrament, in which He Himself should be really present, and should give us His Body as true meat and His Blood as true drink, in testimony of His love, for the strengthening of our hope and the awakening of our memory, as the companion of our solitude, our resource in all our necessities and tribulations, as a pledge of eternal blessedness, and a confirmation of the promises of the New Testament. And now, in

that loving Providence with which He provided for His Church, being at the outset of His Passion, and so near to His death, all His thoughts were directed to provide that this sovereign Food should never fail in her until the end of the world.

Having then accomplished[1] that work of the greatest charity and humility, the washing the feet of His disciples—who were now all full of suspense and expectation, waiting to see what would be the isssue of that new ceremony which He had performed—our Saviour, albeit wearied by what He had gone through, yet, with great calmness and dignity resuming the garments He had laid aside, returned again to the table and sat down. And as though a new supper and feast were now about to begin, He commanded His disciples to sit down with Him. Then, as they were all attentive, He said to them—'You have now well seen what I have done unto you. You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for I am so in truth. If then I, being your Master and your Lord, have washed your feet, you remain obliged to do one to another any office of charity, however difficult and despised it may be. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you so you do also one to another For the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither is the Apostle greater than He that sent him. If you know these things you shall be blessed if you do them.' And it is a wonderful thing, and very worthy of consideration, that our Saviour did not let pass any opportunity of disclosing the feeling caused in Him by the treason of Judas, and of letting it be understood that He was not being drawn on to death by treachery, but that He went of His own will; and for this cause He added—'And in that I have said you shall be blessed, I do not speak it of you all; I know whom I have chosen, but after all the Scripture must be fulfilled, which saith, "He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against Me, and betray Me." I tell you this before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass you may believe that I am He Whom I have preached unto you that I am.'

Meanwhile, all the Apostles were looking on Him with attention and reverence, seeing from His demeanour and His

[1] St. John xiii. 12.

countenance that He was about to perform some great and unwonted act. Then our Lord, taking in His hands a loaf of the unleavened bread which had been left on the table after the supper was over, and considering in mind the great marvel which He was about to work in it, in that it was to be a memorial of the wonders and mercies of God,[2] raised His eyes to His omnipotent and eternal Father, showing by that ceremony that from Him alone proceed all power and virtue to perform such wonderful works. He also gave Him thanks (as He alone could worthily do) for all the benefits which He had received in His holy Humanity, and particularly for that immense benefit which at that time He was about to do to all the world. Then He blessed the bread itself with new words and especial benediction, and such as prepared the souls of the Apostles, and made them intent on the new and special work He was about to perform. After this He divided the bread with His own hands into the portions required, that He therewith might communicate all, and then our Lord consecrated it by His words, converting by virtue of them the bread into His Body, and by His divine power causing that same Body of His, which was present and visible to the eyes of His Apostles, to be also really present, although invisible to the eyes of the body, hidden and covered, beneath the accidents of the bread. And the words with which He consecrated it were those self same words by which He gave His Apostles clearly to understand what was the food that He then gave them, saying —'Take ye and eat, for this which I give you is My Body; the same Body which shall be delivered up for you and placed upon the Cross for the salvation of the world.' Having so said, He Himself gave Himself communion before the others, receiving His own Body under the species of bread, and then He gave to all and to each in particular a portion of that consecrated Bread, and they all received It and ate, understanding well what It was, for our Saviour Himself had told them in plain and manifest words

There was also placed upon the table a cup or chalice of

[2] Psalm cx. 4.

wine mixed with a little water, and our Lord, taking it in His hands and giving thanks to His Eternal Father, blessed it in like manner with especial benediction, and consecrated it by His words, converting that wine into His Blood, and by means of His divine power causing the self same Blood which He had in His veins to be really present in the chalice under the accidents of the wine. And the words with which He consecrated it were those self same words by which He made His disciples clearly and distinctly to understand what it was He was giving them to drink, saying—'Drink ye all of this chalice which I give you, for it has in it My Blood, in which the New Testament is confirmed, and which shall be shed on the Cross for you for the remission of sins.'

As our Saviour had come into the world to form a new and spiritual people, and to establish and ratify with it a new covenant and a Testament more excellent by far than the Old Testament which had been made with the carnal nation of the Jews—for the commandments of this New Testament are sweeter and more perfect, and the gifts and promises contained in it more illustrious, since they are not of temporal goods but of eternal—so also this Testament was confirmed, not like the first, with the blood of animals, but with the Blood of the Lamb without spot, Jesus Christ our Lord, which, being shed upon the Cross, was efficacious to do away with the sins of the whole world. This Testament was ordained by our Lord in His last Supper, His Apostles being present in the name of the whole Church; and in order that what He then ordained might have greater firmness and security, He gave them to drink of His Blood, saying—'Drink ye all of this chalice, for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which will be shed for men for the remission of sins.'

And as, moreover, our Lord designed that the Sacrifice and Sacrament which He instituted in this last Supper should endure in His Church unto the end of the world, not only did He Himself consecrate the bread and the wine into His Body and Blood, but He gave power to His Apostles that they also should do the same, and that they should communicate the

same power through the bishops to priests legitimately ordained, until He should come again as a Judge and as long as the world should endure. He moreover expressly commanded that whenever they celebrated this Sacrifice they should do it in remembrance of Him, and of the love with which He died for men, because that for this reason He would remain ever present among them, and leave them a legacy so rich as that of His Body and Blood, with all the treasures of grace which He had merited by His Passion, in order that they might never at any time be unmindful of Him. Therefore He said to them, *Hoc quotiescumque feceritis, in Mei memoriam facietis*—'Whenever you do this, you shall do it always in remembrance of Me.'

O admirable Sacrament! O inestimable benefit! O incomprehensible love! O bread of Angels and food of Heaven! contrived for the sustenance and strengthening of men who are on their way as pilgrims through the world, by that wonderful fire of love which our Lord manifested in His Passion, with so much force and efficacy as to make of men angels, and of creatures of earth children of heaven, transforming them in the love of Him Who has loved them so much! O words worthy to be received with entire faith, thankfulness, and reverence! That our Lord, Who cannot and will not deceive, should say with His own mouth—'Take and eat, for This is My Body; and drink ye all of this chalice, for this is My Blood!' O what infinite liberality! O gift worthy of God! What can I, O my Lord, give Thee for this benefit, except to say, with all the affection of my heart—'Behold, O Lord, this is my body, which I offer for Thee to sufferings, sicknesses, weariness, fatigue, and penance; and this is my blood, which from henceforth I offer Thee to be shed, if so it be for Thy service, for Thy glory; this is my soul, Thy creature, made subject and given up to all that is Thy will?'

After all these things had been done, our Saviour, seeing that His death was so near at hand, and also the hardness of heart and the obstinacy of Judas in his evil purpose, and that it had not sufficed that He had pointed out his treachery and

signified to him in so many different ways that the secret he was so much endeavouring to cover and conceal was manifest to Him, that again, his seeing Him kneeling at his feet to wash them had not been enough to touch and soften his heart, or bring a little shame into his face, but that, on the contrary, he had with daring wickedness still remained at table amongst the other Apostles, and had received with evil conscience the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord ; looking upon, conversing with, and eating from the same dish with Him Who was acquainted with the whole of his iniquity—on this, our Lord, seeing near Him a man who was so hardened and so full of malice and abominable thoughts, gave place to the feeling which as Man He might well have for so horrible and abominable a treason, and He began to be disturbed[3] and troubled in spirit, and spoke once more in solemn affirmation and asseveration—'Of a truth I say unto you, one of you is the man who shall sell Me.' And as our Lord named no one, He cast fear into the hearts of all, and they looked at one another, doubting of whom He spake. For although the conscience of no one accused him of that treachery, yet they gave more credit to the words of our Lord than to their own thoughts, acknowledging with humility that they were men, and that man easily changes and may easily fall.

At that time the Apostle St. John was immediately next to our Saviour at the table, and seeing Him disturbed and troubled, he, with the confidence which was given him by the especial love his Master had ever shown towards him, treating him with caressing affection, leaned his head upon His sacred breast. And our Saviour, in that night of sublime mysteries and such ineffable Sacraments, amidst all His cares and His sorrows, lovingly received St. John on His bosom, finding Himself also some rest in the loyal heart and sincere love of His Evangelist, and gladly receiving that alleviation of the affliction caused Him by the presence of the traitor.

But the Apostle St. Peter, full of his usual fervour, was very anxious to discover the enemy, in order to tear him to

[3] St. John xiii. 21.

pieces, if he could, with his own hands. He did not venture to put the question himself, and yet his heart urged him not to leave untried any kind of diligence in such a matter. He saw, moreover, the especial favour manifested by our Saviour to St. John in presence of all the other disciples, and the opportunity which he therefore had to find out the matter without causing any tumult and with the secrecy which was meet, so he beckoned to him,[4] making signs from the place where he was seated, that he should ask of our Saviour, who he was of whom He had spoken? Then St. John, as he was reclining on the bosom of Jesus, asked Him, with all confidence, to tell him who it was. And our Saviour answered, as it seems with a low voice, so as to be heard by St. John alone—'He it is to whom I shall give the bread dipped.' And immediately taking a piece of bread, and dipping it in some sauce or stew which was left on the table, He gave it to Judas. This action was to St. John a mark and sign by which he might know the traitor, and to Judas it was a particular distinction and favour bestowed upon him for the purpose of touching his heart and forcing him, if he were not incorrigibly obdurate, to change his evil intentions.

But the wretched man, from his own fault and evil disposition, always grew worse by the remedies which were used for his salvation, and thus, with the morsel given to him by our Saviour,[5] Satan entered into his soul. He had before entered there to prompt him to bargain for and settle for the sale of his Master to the Jews, and now he took possession of him with greater power, instigating him to go at once and execute his bargain. Then our Saviour, seeing that he was so blinded and so deluded, said to him with His accustomed calmness and gentleness—'That which thou hast to do, do quickly.' Now none of those who were at table understood for what purpose our Saviour said these words. But some thought that as Judas kept the purse in which were the common funds, our Saviour was desirous of telling him to go and purchase something that was necessary for the Pasch, or that he should give some alms

[4] St. John xiii. 24. [5] *Ibid.* 27.

to the poor, as was His custom. But in truth our Saviour spoke to the thoughts of His heart, and therefore He said, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' Not that He thereby gave consent to, or instigated him to put in execution, so great a wickedness—rather He reproved him for it to his face, letting him see that He knew what was in his heart—but that for His own part He did not intend to obstruct his course or disturb his designs, but rather permitted them and gave place to his malice, and that in His infinite charity He had greater desire to suffer death than Judas in his incredible wickedness had to sell Him that He might be put to death. So as soon as Judas had eaten the morsel and heard those words, impelled by infernal furies, he went out of the chamber and the house where our Saviour was, never to return to His company any more. And when Judas went out, it was already night.[6]

[6] St. John xiii. 30.

CHAPTER V.

Our Saviour takes leave of His most Holy Mother before going to His Passion.

It is certain that the Blessed Virgin was not ignorant of the cause for which the Son of God had been made Man in her womb—that is, in order to redeem the human race by most bitter torments, by the shedding of His Blood, and by His death upon the Cross. She had known this first through reading and meditating upon the Sacred Scriptures, even before her Son had become incarnate. She learnt it a second time through the prophecy delivered by the aged Simeon when she presented her Son in the Temple. Thirdly, she knew it from the frequent communications which she held with her Son on this point; for if our Lord so often warned His disciples respecting it, He must have much more frequently given His Mother information concerning it. Indeed, there is much for us to ponder in those long and retired conversations which He had with His Mother, giving her understanding and light as to the Holy Scriptures, and showing her by all of them that it was meet that Christ should suffer in order to enter into His glory. For if our Saviour spoke to His disciples again and again of His Passion, how much more and better, and more in particular, must He have given an account of it to His Mother, in order to console Himself and relieve Himself with her? For, as for the disciples, as they did not understand the mystery,[1] our Lord could find little relief in talking with them about it. When He discovered it to them for the first time, they tried to persuade Him that it was not for Him, as St. Peter did.[2] When He again spoke to them of His Passion, as they had lost the hope of diverting

[1] St. Luke xviii. 34. [2] St. Matt. xvi. 22.

Him from it, and saw that our Saviour was in truth in this way to suffer,[3] they became sad and full of fear. Afterwards, at the time of the Prayer in the Garden, though they had been so often warned and told beforehand, and though they saw their Master in so much agony, and that He came to them for some consolation, they were weighed down with sleep and dismay. Thus our Lord always found trouble with them: at one time He had to restrain their indiscreet zeal by reproof, at another to animate their weakness by consolation, at another to exhort them and to instruct them and to arm them against temptation. And if, with all this, our Lord went on continually communicating His sorrow to them and seeking consolation where He found so little thereof, how often must we not believe that He conversed about this matter with His Mother! How would He relieve and repose Himself with her, giving her an account of His cares and anxieties! How would He relate to her the calumnies, the envy, the hatred, and the persecutions of the Jews! How minutely would He give her an account of the end in which that storm and tempest would issue, and how at last He would be overwhelmed by its billows![4] We cannot doubt that He discoursed many times and at great leisure with His Mother about these things, easing His Heart and consoling Himself with her, who so profoundly understood that mystery, who accepted it with such entire conformity to God's will, offered it up with so much devotion, and felt it with so much ineffable tenderness, and, in short, had her heart so perfectly alike to and united and one with the Heart of her Son.

From all that has been said, we cannot but believe that our Blessed Lady meditated very frequently, and as it were continually, on the Passion, seeing that both her love and her sorrow led her thoughts to this. For must she not have always been full of grief when she thought of the Passion of her Son, and felt by her own experience what Simeon had prophesied, that a sword was to pierce her own soul?[5] Whenever she saw and gazed upon the Body of her beloved Son, there occurred to her mind the torments He was to suffer in each one of His limbs,

[3] St. Mark x. 32 [4] Psalm lxviii. 2. [5] St. Luke ii. 35.

she considered His sacred head and the thorns, His face and the buffets, His shoulders and the scourges, His feet and hands pierced with nails, His side with the lance. And whenever she embraced Him, she also embraced in her own heart all these pains and insults, saying, 'A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me ; He shall abide between my breasts.'[6]

Hence sprang up in the soul of the Blessed Virgin very great wonder and the most ardent love. For, by the light communicated to her by the Holy Ghost, she well understood the sublimity of the majesty of God, the insignificance and vileness of men, as well as the bitterness of the torments He was to suffer for them ; and comparing these things together, she saw the greatness of the charity of God, the inestimable benefit which was being bestowed on the whole human race, and also the excellent share which she had in that benefit. And corresponding to that knowledge there were in her chaste and humble heart the profoundest thankfulness and the most fervent love of God, and also an equally great and burning charity for men themselves, whom she saw that God so greatly esteemed that to heal them He was to deliver His own Son to so bitter and ignominious a death. And hence there was born in her that most tender mercy and that pity towards miserable sinners which are in her heart, so that she yearned to devote herself entirely as far as was possible in remedying their woes. And hereupon we ought to found our hope that she will never weary of interceding for us, since in labouring for our weal she does that for which her Son came into the world, and thereby reaps the price of our redemption and the Blood which He shed for us.

The Blessed Virgin being thus provided with such clear intelligence and such profound and continual meditation upon the Passion of her Son, and knowing for certain that that was the night in which He would be delivered up to death, came after Him to Jerusalem, and, with the other holy women who usually accompanied her, repaired to the self same house in which our Saviour was to celebrate the Pasch. And although, as it seems most likely, she remained in a different chamber from

[6] Cant. I. 12.

that in which her Son was with His Apostles, still she followed minutely and knew from moment to moment all that our Saviour did, said, and ordained. She, with her exceeding love and humility, prepared the supper, as she had done many times before, nor did she disdain any office how humble soever, knowing that her Son was occupied in washing with His own hands the feet of His Apostles. Then she also understood how He had given them to eat His Body and to drink of His Blood, under the accidents of bread and wine, and had instituted this Divine Sacrament to endure perpetually in the Church. And as she was more deeply pierced than any other created being with the love of her Son, and more illuminated than any by the Divine Spirit, she had greater light to understand better than all the sublimity of the mystery, to estimate the immensity of the benefit, and to give more heartfelt thanks for this consolation and companionship which was to remain to her in the absence of her Son and during the time of her pilgrimage. There, in fine, she remained and heard, as far as might be, that long discourse and sermon in which her Son took leave of His Apostles, waiting for the end of that most loving leavetaking to come.

The discourse being ended,[7] our Saviour rose with great resolution and His disciples with Him, and then they all gave thanks and sang praises to God. It would seem that they said some prayer or canticle which was commonly used as a thanksgiving after eating, to which the Evangelist alludes when he says, *Et hymno dicto.* And if this hymn which it was customary to sing was, as some imagine, seven entire psalms, from the 112th, which begins *Laudate, pueri Dominum,* to the 118th which begins *Beati immaculati in via,* we may gather from this how careful our Saviour was to give thanks to His Eternal Father for every benefit of whatever kind, since in a night of so many cares and so much trouble, He nevertheless offered thanks after His last Supper at such length, and chanting, so to give us an example of thankfulness, and fulfilling that which God commanded in the Law,[8] *Cum comederis et satiatus fueris,*

[7] St. Matt. xxvi. 30 [8] Deut. viii. 10.

benedicas Domino Deo tuo pro terra optima quam dedit tibi— 'When thou hast eaten and art full, thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the abundant favours and excellent food which He hath given thee.'

The Blessed Virgin, then, seeing that her Son had risen, retired into the most secret part of her chamber to await the last embrace and farewell which was about to cost her so much grief. And soon she saw Him enter with His accustomed calmness and modesty, His face flushed with the work He had performed in the washing of the feet, and the long discourse which He had delivered after the Supper, and much more with the great fervour of His burning charity, and approaching her with the love and reverence due from such a Son to His Mother, 'Lady,' He said, 'I come not to tell thee of things of which thou art ignorant, but to take leave of thee for the purpose of which thou knowest. Many times have I relieved Myself in discoursing of it with thee; give thanks to God, Lady, that it has fallen to thy good lot to have a Son Who has to die, for justice, indeed, but the justice of God which He has to satisfy, and to justify men and reconcile them with God. Be consoled, Lady, for the fruit is great and the tempest short, and very soon I will visit thee again full of immortality and glory. In doing what I have to do to-day, I fulfil the commandment of My Father and accomplish His most holy will. The comfort that I desire to take with Me will be to know that thou art not without some comfort; and since time presses, give to me, Lady, thy farewell, thy hand, and thy blessing.'

Oh, how peaceful were the tears which then flowed down the face of the Blessed Virgin! how great the grief which pierced her heart, and yet how constant and determined was she to obey and conform herself to what God disposed! What burning charity to offer her Son, Whom she so tenderly loved, for the glory of God and the salvation of men! 'May Thy Father give to Thee, my Son,' the Virgin would have answered, 'His benediction from heaven,' and she would then add— 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it done unto me according to His will.' Our Lord would weep also, since He

afflicted Himself and wept on seeing Mary Magdalene weep at the death of Lazarus her brother. And then, both unable to speak from the intensity of their feeling, they must have taken that last farewell, folded in one another's arms and each saluting the other with due love in silence. And then the Son would tear Himself away from His Mother, and she would follow Him with her eyes till she lost sight of Him. And we must esteem most highly, and be most grateful, and own ourselves deeply obliged for, that love wherewith the Blessed Virgin gave her Son to suffer and die for us.

CHAPTER VI.

Our Saviour goes to the Garden and tells His Disciples of His sorrow.

Our Lord having taken leave of His Mother, rejoined His disciples, who were waiting for Him, and then, accompanied and surrounded by them, He left the house where He had supped, and departed from that unhappy city which had rejected Him, abandoning the ungrateful and repudiated Synagogue, leaving it to the eternal night and blindness in which it still remains. He took his way to the Mount of Olives on the other side of the brook Cedron, whither at other times He had been wont to resort at night to pray.[1] And whilst He was on His road thither, looking upon His disciples, He said, 'All you shall be scandalized this night, and you shall fly from Me and forsake Me when you shall see what shall come to pass.' Our Saviour said this to them according to His wont, speaking according to the present time and occasion of what was most painful to His Heart, and showing that He knew and understood,

[1] St. Luke xxii. 39.

as Son of God,[2] what was to happen to Himself and to them, and that He went to death of His own will, not perforce, not in ignorance, not deceived by any craft; and also to give them good courage to come back to Him after they had left Him, in confidence and security that He would pardon them that weakness, as He Himself had known of it before it came to pass, and being full of love for them had foretold it to them. 'For,' said He, 'this your scandal and fall will not be new to Me, since so it was to be, and many years ago it had been prophesied by Zacharias,[3] "I will strike the Shepherd," that is, I will deliver My Son to death, "and the sheep shall be scattered," for you will take to flight and be dispersed. Nevertheless two things may console you and animate your courage; first, that I shall rise again the third day after My death, and secondly, that when I am risen I will go before you into Galilee, and there you shall see Me and rejoice and take courage at the sight.'

Twice before our Saviour left the house He had, during the discourse which He delivered after the supper, reproved St. Peter for his excessive fervour. For, trusting in himself more than he ought, he had boasted before the other Apostles that he would let himself be imprisoned and die rather than forsake his Master, and, as it appears, he was still going on in the same state of bravery and strong feeling, and had armed himself with a sword if it should be necessary for defence. When therefore he saw that our Saviour had spoken generally of them all, saying, 'All you shall be scandalized in Me,'[4] not considering that He Who spoke was the Truth, or how weak he himself was, he exempted himself from that general statement, saying, 'Though all shall be shaken or scandalized, yet I will never be scandalized.' Peter spoke what he felt in his heart at the time; but as he sought to make himself singular among all, our Lord directed His reply especially to him, warning him he had no ground for presuming on his own vain confidence, nor for doubting the truth of His prediction, which would most certainly prove accurate, and would be so soon accomplished, that[5] before the cock crew

[2] St. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* l. iii. c. 2. [3] Zach. xiii. 3.
[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 31. [5] St. Mark xiv. 30.

twice that self same night, Peter would deny him thrice. Notwithstanding all this, St. Peter would not receive with humility the prophecy of our Lord, and it seemed to him that he would be denying his Master at once if he did not declare his resolution and determination to follow and to confess Him, and so he said,[6] 'Think not, Lord, that my love for Thee is so weak as to be disturbed by seeing Thee delivered up to death, for if it were necessary to die with Thee and in Thy company I would gladly do it, so as not to deny Thee.' And all the other Apostles made the same offer and boasted in like manner.

Discoursing together thus, they went forth from the city and descended into the profound and sombre valley which was therefore named the valley of Cedron,[7] in the deepest hollow of which flowed a stream that took its name from the place and was called[8] the brook of Cedron. On the other side of this brook, on the left hand, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, was the Garden which was called Gethsemani, whither, on account of its being so lonely and remote, our Saviour was often accustomed to resort in order to pray. Although in passing through the valley and over the brook the disciples strove to be of good courage, yet we may well believe that they were greatly troubled and afraid, for the valley was deep and dark, and, on account of the thickness of the trees as well as the steepness of the rocks and the hollows of the mountain, the silence and loneliness of the place were very great. The night was dark and close, some considerable space of time must have elapsed since Judas left the supper room,[9] and even when he went out it was already night, and all the discourse that evening had been announcements of treasons, dishonours, torments, and death. What effect would all this, in the midst of that solitude and obscurity, have had on the hearts of those few weak and unarmed men?

Having arrived at the entrance of the farm or Garden of Gethsemani,[10] our Lord commanded eight of His disciples to remain there, while He went further in to pray, charging them

[6] St. Matt. xxvi. 35. [7] 4 Kings xxiii. 4. [8] Jer. xxxi. 40.
[9] St. John xiii. 30. [10] St. Matt. xxvi. 36.

at the same time to watch and pray lest they should be conquered by temptation.[11] And then taking with him the three disciples whom He especially loved, He withdrew with them[12] farther into the interior of the Garden. There He began to feel what was quite new to Him, an unaccustomed fear and failing of heart, together with a profound sadness which obliged Him to disclose it to the three disciples. And He said to them—'My Soul is sorrowful even unto death;' which was as though He had said, 'So great is the sorrow which My Soul feels, that it alone would be sufficient to cause its death.' And in order to show the force of this feeling, the Evangelist explains it by different names, calling it sadness, which is a feeling caused[13] by the apprehension of some present evil, and also fear, dread, or amazement,[14] which proceed from evil which is anticipated. Both the one and the other, the sorrow with the fear and the fear with the sorrow, like two heavy weights, oppressed the Heart of our Lord to such a degree as to cause that mortal anguish which the Evangelist designates by the term of heaviness, when he says—*Cœpit pavere et de tædere.*[15]

Our Lord had many causes for anguish and grief shut up in His Heart, which He had suffered during the whole of His life, and at this time, on account of new motives, they pressed upon Him more heavily than ever, and made themselves felt in many different ways. For though it be true that that most holy Soul of His, from the first moment that it was created, enjoyed the clear vision of God, and the ordinary law for one who sees God is that he cannot suffer any pain at all, but that both in body and soul he enjoys glory and blessedness; yet in order that it might be possible for us to be redeemed by the precious travail of our Lord, it was ordained that His beatitude and His joy should be confined to the superior portion of His Soul, and should not overflow to the lower part or to the body, our Lord thus renouncing the blessedness which was His right in order to accept the pains and sufferings which we owed to God. Hence came not only the sufferings of His sacred Body, but

[11] St. Luke xxii. 40. [12] St. Matt. xxvi. 37. [13] *Ibid.*
[14] St. Mark xiv. 33. [15] *Ibid.*

also the sorrows and anguish of His most blessed Soul, showing in all that He was very Man, and giving place to those feelings and affections in which there is no sin, as though indeed He had been only Man. Thus, as it was no disgrace to our Saviour to suffer hunger and thirst and weariness and other fatigues in His Body, so also was it no disgrace for Him to suffer grief, fear, and heaviness in His Soul. Both the one and the other He suffered voluntarily, and if He had so willed it He might have prevented them. But though He suffered voluntarily, and might if He had chosen have hindered it, yet He did not therefore the less show by suffering that He was very Man, and had the same natural dispositions as other men. Thus if a man who was suffering great pain in his head or his stomach had at the same time at hand a remedy so efficacious that it would be infallibly certain that he would be rid of the pain immediately he applied it, we should say of him that if he suffered, he suffered voluntarily, and yet all the same he would show by suffering that pain that he was a man weak as others, and subject like them to pain. In the same way we may reason as to our Lord—that although He had power by virtue of His Divinity and by reason of His vision of God, to hinder the sufferings of His Body and the sorrows of His Soul, yet since He did not choose to prevent them, the same natural causes which affected other men naturally produced in His Soul anguish, and in His Body pain. And thus, on the one hand, our Saviour suffered voluntarily, because being able to prevent His Passion He did not do so, and, on the other hand, He showed that He was truly Man, because, granted that He did not choose to impede suffering, there were such strong reasons for His suffering that He suffered naturally, and that His Humanity by itself could not avoid it. And this, perhaps, was the desertion of which He complained when on the Cross He cried out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'[16]

And this was one and the principal of the causes for which our Saviour chose not only to suffer pain in His Body, but also

[16] St. Mark xxvii. 46.

sorrow and anguish in His Soul, to show that He was very Man, of the same nature as ourselves, and that He was most vividly sensible of torments and outrages; also that He was neither endowed with an impassible Body, nor made of stone or of brass, as Job says.[17] Moreover, it was a great advantage for our consolation in the midst of suffering and anguish, that when any of the saints and friends of God should feel repugnance to these, they might not therefore be discouraged and imagine that they had lost the grace of God. For such feelings as these are not so much sins, as signs of the weakness natural to man, and this weakness our Lord chose to take on Himself, making Himself therein like unto us, that we might endeavour to make ourselves like unto Him in His fortitude and conformity to the divine will. For without doubt the greatest constancy is shown, not where the troubles are greatest, but where the feelings are most lively: *Nec enim habent fortitudinis laudem qui stuporem magis vulnerum tolerant quam dolorem*—those ought not to be praised as valiant, says St. Ambrose,[18] whose wounds make them insensible to pain, but those rather who feel their pain the most keenly. Our Saviour also desired to have part, not only in the sufferings of the body, but also in the sorrows of the soul, in order that having to such an extent participated in our miseries, He might in return communicate to us in like manner His own goods.[19] *Suscepit enim tristitiam meam, ut mihi suam lætitiam largiretur, et vestigiis nostris descendit usque ad mortis cærumnam, ut nos suis vestigiis revocaret ad vitam. Debuit ergo et dolorem suscipere, ut vinceret tristitiam, non excluderet*—'He took upon Him,' says the same Saint, 'my sorrows that He might give me His joys; and treading in our footprints, He went down so low as the pain of death itself, in order that we might tread in His footprints and so regain life. Therefore it was fitting that He should feel sorrow also, that He might conquer sadness rather than not allow it to approach Him.' Our Saviour had, moreover, to take to Himself the bitter medicine for our infirmities, that we might be cured of them, and in Himself to chastise our disorders, and perform

[17] Job vi. 12. [18] In cap. Luc. xii. [19] St. Ambrose, *ibid.*

penance for our sins, in order that we might receive their forgiveness. And as He cured and made satisfaction for our pride by the insults which He suffered, and our gluttony by His vinegar and gall, and our pleasures by His pains, so in like manner He chose to heal and to chastise by His own sadness the sins which we commit by interior delights.

For all these causes, therefore, and for others which we do not now touch upon, our merciful Lord and loving Saviour was not only content to suffer strokes upon His shoulders, buffets on His face, thorns on His head, and nails in His hands and feet, but also sorrow and agony in His most blessed Heart. And as He gave permission and power to the ministers of darkness (for without that they could have done nothing) to put Him to these bitter torments, so He also gave permission to that anguish to work upon His Heart as the present occasion, and the motives which He had for it, required.

CHAPTER VII.

The Causes of the Sorrow which our Saviour endured.

Great, without doubt, were the causes which our Saviour had for sorrow, since, it being settled that He would not prevent them, but let them work on Him as much as they could, the effect which they had, and the impression which they produced on His Heart, were so great, that our Lord Himself could say that they had brought Him to the point of death.

For, in the first place, He felt the travail and fatigue He had undergone that day, during which He had come from Bethany to Jerusalem, had celebrated with His disciples the Pasch and the legal Supper at which the Lamb was eaten, and had washed their feet, giving thereby an example of the most profound humility, and of the most refined love. He had, moreover, instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and communicated them all with His own hands. He had afterwards delivered a long discourse and address, in which He had shed forth all the treasures of His charity, endeavouring by all possible means to console and encourage them, calling them little children, My friends, My chosen, the companions of My travails and temptations, more closely united and incorporated with Me than the branches with the vine. He told them that the troubles would be short and the joy great, that the Comforter, Teacher, and Advocate, Whom He was to send to them that He might remain with them always, would be no less a Person than the Holy Spirit Himself; that He Himself was to go before them in the fight and to receive their wounds in His own body, and that with this help they would obtain a glorious victory over the world; finally, that He was returning to His Father, and that this was so great a blessing, that if they loved Him and

desired His welfare, they would feel and show great joy thereat, and especially as He was going to prepare a place for them, in order to come again for them and place them in the heavenly mansions. Throughout the whole of His discourse He showed Himself forgetful of Himself and full of care for them, hiding His own trouble in order not to increase theirs, and not to oppress their weakness with the weight of such great tribulation, thus discharging the office of His great and heartfelt charity.

He had also suffered Judas to be near Himself at the table and to eat with Him out of the same dish. He had fought with the hardness of that poor man's heart, now with words which had a hidden meaning, now with others which were clearer and more manifest, now with acts and demonstrations of particular favour and love, and all without being able to overcome or make the least impression upon him. And all this gave Him that great pain which the presence of enemies and traitors naturally produces, and therefore at various times and in different ways that night He declared what He felt, until the time when He showed it externally by His grief and perturbation of spirit.

He had also parted with infinite tenderness and sorrow from His most Holy Mother, and the sympathetic pain which she felt had pierced His Heart with anguish; and in all these things He had taken care to restrain Himself, to bear up against His sufferings, and to hide what was passing within Him, that He might console His disciples and fulfil the obligations of that last Supper. But, as the sorrow that is kept in does all the more violence to the heart, and naturally seeks some vent by which to obtain a little relief and comfort, so when our Lord found Himself in the solitude of the Garden, and no longer obliged to keep up appearances before the eight disciples whom He had left at the entrance, He allowed His sorrow to declare itself, and let His Heart seek relief and pleasure in the love and loyalty of the Apostles who were more especially dear to Him. Therefore He disclosed what He felt to them, saying—'My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'

Again, a consideration of no less grief to our Lord was to see the hatred and ill will of His enemies, which had made

them not only contrive His death but seek so many opportunities and invent so many ways and devices of injury and torments for Him, and of treating Him in the midst of His anguish with so much contempt and derision. For this was to behave like people who had gained their point and were triumphing over Him as fallen and abandoned by God, and who said of Him what had been prophesied in His name in the Psalms:[1] *Deus dereliquit eum, persequimini et comprehendite eum, quia non est qui eripiat*—'God hath forsaken Him, pursue and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him.' This feeling of seeing Himself overcome by His enemies, and that the time had come in which they were to have their way, and put in execution all their hatred upon Him, was represented by our Saviour to His Eternal Father, calling Him to His aid, when He exclaimed,[2] *Vide Domine afflictionem meam, quoniam erectus est inimicus*—'Behold, O Lord, My affliction, because the enemy is lifted up.' And if to hear a lion or a bull roar inspires even those who are in safety with fear and terror, imagining what the strength of the animal would do if it might, how much greater fear and horror must it have caused to our Saviour to see Himself surrounded by wild beasts who were at such full and free liberty to rush upon Him according to their own pleasure? For, of a truth, it was His own favoured people who turned against Him like a lion on this occasion, as the Prophet had signified when he said,[3] *Facta est mihi hæreditas mea quasi leo in silva; dedit contra me vocem*, &c.—'My inheritance is become to Me as a lion in the wood, it hath cried out against Me,' &c. Of this hatred and evil will of the princes and the chiefs among the people that prophecy also of the Psalms had been made,[4] *Circumdederunt me vituli multi, tauri pingues obsederunt me, aperuerunt super me os suum, sicut leo rapiens et rugiens*—'Many calves have surrounded Me, fat bulls have besieged Me, they have opened their mouths against Me as a lion ravening and roaring.' For our Saviour knew clearly and distinctly beforehand the evil will of His enemies who were to be His judges, and all the plots they had made,

[1] Psalm lxx. 11. [2] Lament. i. 9. [3] Jer. xii. 8. [4] Psalm xxi. 13.

and the councils which they had held for His condemnation: and as these things were to cause Him very special pain and sorrow, the Holy Ghost had taken care that they should be deeply pondered many years before by the Prophet, who said,[5] *Tu autem demonstrasti mihi, et cognovi; tunc ostendisti mihi studia eorum, et ego quasi agnus mansuetus, qui portatur ad victimam*—'But Thou, O Lord, hast shown Me and I have known: then Thou showedst Me their doings, and I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim.

Our Saviour likewise knew that being surrounded by such enemies as these, without being able to take flight or escape, He would also be forsaken by His friends and acquaintances, without having any one to look on Him and take His part in the midst of all these calumnies, or be His defender under so many accusations, or strive to save His life, or grieve over His death. It was of this He complained when He said,[6] *Considerabam ad dexteram, et videbam, et non erat qui cognosceret me, periit fuga a me, et non est qui requirat animam meam*—'I looked on My right hand, and beheld, and there was no one who would know Me. Flight hath failed Me, and there is no one that hath regard for My Soul.' How great was the sorrow and agony which His most Sacred Heart suffered from the desertion of His friends and the violence of His enemies, He Himself had declared in the Psalm where He says,[7] *Sicut aqua effusus sum, et dispersa sunt omnia ossa mea, factum est cor meum tanquam cera liquescens in medio ventris mei*—'I am poured out like water, and all My bones are scattered. My Heart is becoming like wax melting in the midst of My bowels.'

Above all, that which occasioned Him supreme sorrow was the death which He had present and so near at hand—a death so painful and ignominious, and so vividly imprinted on His mind. For all the torments He had to undergo were distinctly and particularly represented to Him, and His most exquisite imagination apprehended most perfectly those most cruel sufferings which were being prepared for that most delicate of bodies. The imagination is often wont to afflict and affright more than

[5] Jer. ix. 18, 19. [6] Psalm cxli. 5. [7] *Ibid.* xxi. 15.

death itself, and on this account those who are condemned to die are frequently blindfolded, that they may not see the instruments by which their life is to be taken away, and we endeavour by various devices and reasons to prevent their imagination from dwelling on that thought, practising this kind of mercy towards them because we judge that it is not so painful to receive death as to expect and fear it. But our Saviour, Who, through love towards us, did not seek for any alleviation in His sufferings, looked full in the face the cruel death which He was approaching, and chose not only to suffer in His Body, but that the waters of tribulation should also enter into the very interior of His Soul, as it is written :[8] *Quoniam intraverunt aquæ usque ad animam meam*—'The waters are come in even unto My Soul.' For this cause He gave His thoughts free scope, and began to think over the course and progress of His Passion and all the circumstances thereof, as of a thing that He had present to the eyes of His understanding, and the execution of which was near at hand. He saw with how much passion those unjust judges, under colour of justice, were about to seize Him Who was Justice itself, with how much haughtiness those miserable worms would treat the King of all the world, and with how great daring the slaves of sin would bind the Lord of true freedom. He considered with how much noise and with what dishonour they would take Him unto the house of the Chief Priest through the streets of Jerusalem, where He had worked so many marvels, and how the priests, blinded with avarice and ambition, would seek out witnesses to give false testimony against Him. Moreover, He represented to Himself how they would command their servants to spit on Him and to mock Him and to buffet Him, and how the miserable sons of wrath would satisfy their own wrath in shamefully striking the Lord of Majesty.

He saw how He would be delivered up to Pilate and to the Gentiles, and how the Governor, through vain regard to the world, would pass Him on to Herod, how He would be scoffed at and treated as a fool by his courtiers, and how, when He was brought back to Pilate, He would be scourged and delivered

[8] Psalm lxviii. 1.

up to the soldiers and men of war, that with scorn and insults and mockery they might crown with thorns the true King of all. And going on further in thought, He saw how they would take Him as a condemned criminal from the house of Pilate, with public proclamation and with the Cross on His shoulders, and how, amidst such a multitude of people gathered together to witness this spectacle, He would meet with the holy women who had followed Him and done Him service in supporting Him, and that amongst these He would behold His afflicted Mother. And it could not be but that this thought should overcome Him, and that He should be pierced through and through with sadness and sorrow of heart.

Moreover, going on in thought to Mount Calvary, He beheld the manner in which He was to be crucified, and how those ministers of justice and cruel executioners would raise Him naked upon the Cross, in the sight of God and of the whole Court of Heaven, and before the eyes of His Blessed Mother, and in the sight of all the world, between two malefactors. Then He represented to Himself the intense pain in which for three hours He would remain suspended upon the Cross, forsaken by His friends and insulted by His enemies, and how at last, in the sight of His Eternal Father, and in presence of His holy Mother, He would breathe His last in torment.

The lively representation of a death attended with such circumstances of ignominy and pain produced so intense a feeling in His Heart that He began to tremble and fear at the apprehension of it. His Heart began to be discouraged and melt like wax through the force of His sorrow: *Cæpit pavere et tædere,*[9] *contristari et mœstus esse*[10]—'He began to fear and be heavy,' and 'to grow sorrowful and to be sad.' Then betaking Himself to His three beloved disciples, that He might relieve Himself with them, He said—'My Soul is sorrowful even unto death; I feel anguish and sorrow as to death; I feel pains and agonies sufficient to inflict death. Stay you here a little, I pray you, abide with Me, and watch and be vigilant, and bear Me company in this My bitter strait.'

[9] St. Mark xiv. 33. [10] St. Matt. xxvi. 37.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of other more secret causes of our Saviour's Sorrow.

ALTHOUGH the causes of which we have spoken occasioned our Saviour extreme sorrow and suffering, they did not have the effect of making Him the less readily offer Himself to death, through obedience to the Father and for the salvation of men, even as He had offered Himself from the first moment of His conception. Nevertheless, beholding the load which he was going to take upon His shoulders, He began to be in an agony[1] and persevered in lengthening out His prayer, until from simple anguish He began to sweat blood from His veins. For the business which He had undertaken of making peace between heaven and earth, of reconciling men with God, of paying for the sins of the whole world, of satisfying the justice of God and making His mercy propitious to us, of triumphing over the devil, despoiling hell and opening a new way for us to the gates of heaven, was one of such weighty moment and anxiety, that it oppressed the loving Heart of our Saviour with greater agony than even the torments and ignominy which He was to suffer externally. Hence we may gather what were some of the more secret motives and causes of the horror and agony which our Saviour experienced in His prayer.

The first cause was the greatness of His love, for His grief was in proportion to His love, and as it is impossible to comprehend altogether the height of His love, so just as little can we conceive the depth of His sorrow.[2] For so it was, that that most sacred Soul, immediately on its creation and infusion into His Body in the virginal womb of our Blessed Lady, beheld the Divine Essence as clearly as He does now, and on beholding

[1] St. Luke xxii. 43. [2] M. Avila, *Audi filia*, 79.

It judged how worthy It was of the utmost honour and service, and desired to pay It such, with all the force of ineffable love which had been bestowed upon Him wherewith to love God. But at the same time He beheld all the offences which men had committed against God since the beginning, and those which they were to commit until the end of the world, and on this His grief at seeing the Divine Majesty outraged was as great as His desire had been to behold it honoured. And as no one can soar so high as to understand this desire, no one can attain to understand the greatness of this grief. We read of some who have conceived so deep a repentance for their sins, that not being able to bear the grief which it caused them, they have lost their lives. What sorrow then must be that immeasurable love which Thou, O Lord, hadst for God and man, have caused Thee, seeing that a single spark of it infused into the souls of these penitents, was powerful enough to burst their hearts asunder as a blast of powder!

This first cause of grief, which proceeded from the love of God, was succeeded by another, which came from the immense love felt by our Saviour for men. As He alone knew, and alone could rightly estimate, how great an evil it is to be out of God's good grace, and to have to be without His glorious vision and company for ever, He afflicted Himself beyond measure, beholding those whom He so much loved, placed in such grave and manifest danger. Thus His seeing God offended and men lost through sin, was as a sword with two edges, which pierced His Heart to the very quick, from the love which He bore to God for Himself and to men for His sake, desiring that the honour of God should be satisfied and the misery of men remedied, although it was to be at so great a cost to Himself. For if the Apostle[4] says, that the solicitude and care of the Churches which pressed upon him within consumed him more than all the troubles and persecutions which he suffered from without, and that when any one was weak he also became weak, whenever any one was scandalized he also was on fire, what must not our Lord, Whose charity

[3] M. Avila, *Audi filia*, 80. [4] 2 Cor. xii. 28.

was infinitely greater than that of the Apostle, have suffered in His Heart at this?

In addition to this grief which pierced the Heart of Christ our Lord at seeing God offended and men condemned, there was another which caused Him no less suffering; it was that of beholding Himself laden with the sins of all men, to satisfy the injury done to His Father and pay the debts of His brethren who were under condemnation.[5]

O most blessed Jesus! to see Thee undergoing so many external torments is enough to break a Christian heart, and as for seeing Thee suffering such agony within Thy Soul, there is no sight, no strength that can support it. Isaias says,[6] 'All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Thy love it was, O Lord, which accepted as good this rigorous sentence of Divine Justice, and Thou didst take on Thy shoulders and make Thyself answerable for all the sins without exception which had been committed by mankind, all that they are now committing and will commit from the very beginning of the world until the end, that Thou mightest pay for them, our Lord and our Lover, with the anguish of Thy Heart. And who can count the number of Thy sorrows, seeing that no one can count the number of our sins?

But there is another consideration which infinitely enhances the mercy of God, and reveals another vein of the sorrow and anguish of that night. It is that our Lord desired to pay the price, not only as surety for faults of others, but as though He Himself were the culprit and as if the sins had been His own. For sureties, although they pay for those for whom they have become security, yet pay not as for themselves, and no dishonour accrues to them from the faults of others, and even they gain much honour for paying what they do not owe. But our Lord made Himself entirely one with us, as the head with the body; and so it was His will that our faults should be called His faults, and that He should not only pay them with His Blood, but should suffer shame and confusion for them. And this

[5] *Audi filia*, 79. [6] Isaias liii. 6.

confusion endured by our Saviour for our sins was doubtless very great, and formed a very great portion of the agony He underwent on entering into His Passion, when He took them upon Himself and offered Himself as payment for them. This is what the Prophet desires to signify when he says,[7] *Tota die verecundia mea contra me est, et confusio faciei meæ cooperuit me* —'All the day long My shame is before Me, and the confusion of My face hath covered Me.' And in another place he says, *Operuit confusio faciem meam*[8]—'Shame hath covered My face.' And representing this sorrow to His Eternal Father as one of the greatest which He suffered, He exclaimed, *Tu scis improperium meum, et reverentiam meam*[9]—'Thou knowest My reproach, and My confusion and My shame.'

Herein, then, is revealed to us a new proof of the humility and charity of Christ our Lord. For although our sins were so shameful, and He had to undergo so much shame and confusion in interceding for them, He nevertheless interceded and pleaded for them with the most profound humility and the most ardent charity, as though they had been His own. It often happens that when a man commits any infamous crime, his friends and kindred disavow him and forsake him, that they may escape the contagion of the bad odour of that infamy, and if, perchance, there should be found any one so true a father or friend as to be willing to take some step in the matter, he always begins by repudiating the evil deed, and showing himself to be quite free and foreign to it. But this most merciful Lord and lover of our souls covered His face with shame on account of the abominations which we commit, nor did He disdain to acknowledge and confess us before the tribunal of Divine Justice, not only as His friends and kindred, as brethren and sons, but also as His very members, and as the body of which He is Head. Hence it was that He not only interceded and supplicated that we might be forgiven, but He also offered, as though He Himself were the malefactor, to pay the penalty which we deserved; and thus it was that, although He asked three times in His prayer that, if it were possible, the chalice of His death

[7] Psalm xliii. 16. [8] *Ibid.* lxviii. 8. [9] *Ibid.* 20.

should pass from Him without His drinking it, yet He saw well that on account of the sins which He had taken upon Himself, He was far from gaining His petition, and for this cause He called and considered them as His own, according to that which is written in His Person in the Psalms :[10] *Longe a salute mea verba delictorum meorum*—'Far from My salvation are the words of My sins.' How great, then, must have been Thy agony, O Lord, at this time, since it made Thee sweat the blood from Thy veins? And what shame Thou must have suffered, so pure as Thou wert, when Thou didst see alleged against Thee before the tribunal of God such foul things, as though they had been Thy own offences! Alas for us, for it is we who committed them!

It does not seem as if the sorrows of our Lord could have been greater, if it had not been that they were increased by our ingratitude and neglect to return His love. This is the one thing that most distresses those who bestow benefits upon and show love to others. For to see that there were to be so many who would not recognize or esteem or be thankful for His great benefits, nor avail themselves of a remedy which had cost Him so much, and that after He had given His Blood as medicine for our maladies and as a baptism which would purify our stains, there would with all this still be so many who would die eternally, and so few who would wash their garments in the blood of the Lamb—this was a thing which oppressed the Heart of our Saviour more than can be described in words. Herein He felt anew the sins of men, as of those who trampled upon His Blood, despised His love, and lightly esteemed His benefits. But in far higher degree He felt the sins of those whose ingratitude was deeper and more general on account of their being Christians or religious, or persons who had received greater gifts from God. And if those who love much are greatly afflicted when their love is returned with coldness, tell us, O Lord, what Thou didst feel when, being so full of love towards men, Thou didst see in them so great a want of love, such forgetfulness, and such ingratitude?

[10] Psalm xxi. 1.

Again, in addition to all this, our Saviour had another source of grief, which still more plainly shows His love, and from which we also may derive great consolation. For He saw clearly the paths which His chosen would have to follow to obtain the fruit of His redemption. There were represented to Him in great detail and minuteness all their temptations and their struggles, their fastings and watchings, their persecutions and penances, their travails and fatigues, the insults, injuries, and dishonour they would receive, and their sufferings and martyrdoms. And all these things He beheld not as the sufferings of others, but as His own proper sufferings, for in truth they belonged to Him in many ways. First, because they were the sufferings of His members, and on this ground they were His; secondly, because they would have to suffer them through love for Him, and in order not to deny or offend Him; thirdly, because the persecutors and tyrants themselves would persecute and torment the just for His sake, and because they served and followed Him. For all which reasons our most merciful and faithful Lord took to Himself the weight of all these sufferings as if they were His own and as if He was suffering them.

For if, when Saul was persecuting the faithful, our Lord said to him—'Why persecutest thou Me?' in the same way we might say that the stones of St. Stephen wounded Him, and the fire of St. Laurence burnt Him, and that all the other sufferings of the saints, which He knew and appreciated as we never can, afflicted Him, and that He accepted them at that time and offered them to His Eternal Father in His prayer, feeling the travail of His mystical Body no less acutely than He felt the sufferings of His own natural body.

CHAPTER IX.

Our Saviour prays in the Garden and sweats Blood.

Our Saviour, being now full of these sorrowful thoughts, gave us an excellent example of having recourse to prayer before resorting to human means in similar tribulations. Now that His most holy Humanity, in as far as it shared the weakness of our nature, recoiled from drinking of so bitter a chalice, and now that He saw that all this tempest had been raised against Him through the hatred and envy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the pride and ambition of the chief priests, He did not take any pains to relieve Himself with men until He had first presented Himself before God in prayer, knowing that without His permission not a leaf in the tree moves, and that all things are governed by His will and according to the lofty and hidden designs of His providence. And so, in order to carry out in deed what He had taught by His words,[1] that prayer should be made in secret and with closed doors, He left even the three disciples whom He had taken with Him,[2] and went away from them about a stone's cast—feeling very deeply this separation from them, as it would seem that the Gospel signifies where it says, *Et ipse avulsus est ab eis*,[3] that is to say, He tore Himself away from them, as one whose very heart is torn by the pain of leaving such faithful friends in a time of great tribulation. But still He withdrew from them, notwithstanding that His Heart was torn to part from them, showing us the firmness and constancy with which we ought to execute what we judge to be best and most for the service of God. He also placed Himself just at such a distance that they might receive an example from Him, and that He also might pray with greater quiet and pour

[1] St. Matt. vi. 6. [2] *Ibid.* xxvi. 39. [3] St. Luke xxii. 41.

out His afflicted Heart with more freedom in the sight of His Father.

Having then taken His place, He knelt down[4] and then prostrated Himself with the most profound humility and with no less agony, and, with His Divine Face on the ground, began His prayer, saying,[5] 'Father.' Another Evangelist repeats it thus,[6] 'Father, Father;' and another says,[7] 'My Father'—as though He rejoiced Himself in the Father Who had sentenced Him to die and was now delivering Him to death, and in submitting Himself lovingly and with the spirit of a Son to His Father, although He beheld Him as with the sword in His hand, much more perfectly than Isaac submitted himself when seeing his father armed with the fire and the knife to offer him in sacrifice, said to him,[8] 'My father.' And here our Lord taught us, also, a great remedy wherewith to strengthen our confidence in the midst of troubles—that is, by recognizing the Fatherly love wherewith God chastises us, and by calling upon Him with mouth and heart, 'Father, Father.'

Our Saviour said then,[9] Father, Father, Father Who art especially Mine, for I am Thy only-begotten Son, if it be possible—or as the other Evangelist says, if Thou will; that is, if with Thy will, and with Thy desire—it be possible, I entreat of Thee that I may not drink this chalice. As if He said, I desire not anything which Thou dost not desire, and what Thou willest not, that, though it be in itself very easy, is to Me as impossible; and this being so, that which I ask Thee, Lord, is on condition that Thou willest it, and if Thou being willing, this can be done, that which I could desire is not to drink this draught. And to teach us that to feel difficulty and repugnance to trials and to suffer agony and sadness under them, and to desire according to the flesh to be spared and escape them, does not diminish in the slightest degree the perfection of virtue, for the will remains perfectly subject to and conformed to that of God—after having shown, on the one hand, the sorrow and natural repugnance of His holy Humanity, although

[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 39. [5] St. Luke xxii. 42. [6] St. Mark xiv. 36.
[7] St. Matt. xxvi. 39. [8] Gen. xxii. 7. [9] St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

He had signified it with so much gentleness and resignation, saying, 'if it were possible,' and 'if His Father should so will it,' yet notwithstanding all this, He did violence to Himself once more in the same way, remitting Himself expressly to the will of God, and as if withdrawing what He had first said, He said, on the other hand, *Verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu*[10]—'Nevertheless, let it be done, O Lord, not as I will, but as Thou willest and ordainest.'

Oh, example worthy of being received and imitated with the utmost reverence and humility! For remember that He Who thus prays is the consubstantial and only-begotten Son of God, the Son beloved above all love, that most obedient Son in Whom His Father had always been well pleased. Consider that He to Whom He prays is His own Father; the Father Almighty, in Whose power lay all that He asked of Him; and that the subject of His prayer is His own death, a death so cruel and ignominious, a death which He did not deserve. And with all this how great is the reverence with which He speaks and the moderation with which He prays! Observe that He does not resolve to ask except for that which is also the will of His Father; and how in a matter of moment such as was never seen, this most loving Son does not entreat for that which His flesh desires, but only for that which is pleasing to His Father. And we vile slaves, who for our sins deserve any punishment whatsoever, do not consider for what or for what cause we pray, or with what determination and importunity we ask! Our Sovereign Maker here teaches us how to pray, and that after having represented to the Eternal Father our desires, we are to say with reverence and resignation, *Verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu.*

Our Saviour, having finished His prayer, returned to seek His disciples, who had fallen asleep through weariness and sorrow, and He discharged in this the office of a watchful and diligent Superior, to arouse them and to warn them for the encounter which was at hand. And it could not fail to cause Him great grief to see that Judas was so active and vigilant in

[10] St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

accomplishing his treason, and that His disciples were so remiss and sleepy in prayer. And as Peter had shown greater fervour and presumption than the others in offering with so much impetuosity to go to prison and to death rather than abandon his Master, and had also failed to enter into himself, or to humble himself at what our Lord had said to him before, when He admonished him as to the weakness and the cowardice which he would manifest that very night, our Lord took occasion from his sleep to warn him and make him recollect himself, and not presume upon great and difficult things when he was not able to accomplish easy and lesser duties. Therefore, addressing Himself especially to him, He said[11]—'Simon, dost thou also sleep? You said that you were ready to go with Me[12] and in My company to prison and to death, and now have you not been able to watch with Me for only so short a time as this? With Me, I say, Who have been watching and praying, and suffering agony and sweating blood; with Me, when even if I were to fall asleep and rest Myself, it would have been your place to watch in My defence?' This is the meaning contained in that touching and loving reproof, *Simon, dormis? Non potuisti una hora vigilare mecum?*

Then having turned to the others, who as they had followed St. Peter[13] in his offers, had also imitated him in his sleep, He lovingly admonished them, saying, 'Watch and pray, not so much for My sake as on account of your own danger, that ye may not be overcome by temptation. And do not be careless because you have a good will, for although the spirit is ready to do and suffer, the flesh is weak, and makes war on the spirit and will overcome it, if you do not persevere in prayer to gain from God vigour and fortitude.'

And what our Lord taught them in these words, He next confirmed by His example. For being still in an agony, He returned the second time to prayer, and strained Himself to subjection and uniformity with the will of His Father, and so He said[14]—'My most beloved Father, I have entreated Thee

[11] St. Mark xiv. 37. [12] St. Luke xxii. 33.
[13] St. Matt. xxvi. 35. [14] *Ibid.* 42.

that if it be possible I may not have to drink of so bitter a chalice ; but if it has been otherwise ordained by Thee, and it cannot be but that I drink it, Thy will be done in Me.' Then, not forgetting the weakness of His disciples, He returned to them after His prayer, and found them sleeping a second time,[15] for they had been overcome by drowsiness, their eyes were heavy and they unable to rouse themselves. And He showed them how weak they would be when trial came, if so short a time before they had fallen asleep in prayer. But the gentle and most prudent Master did not say anything to them, in order not to afflict them, regarding it as sufficient reproof that they saw how, after they had been warned, He had found them sleeping, and that they were so filled with confusion at this[16] that they knew not what to answer in their own excuse. Nor have we any excuse for the little company we give to our Saviour in His Passion, except that our eyes are so weighed down with sleep from the vapours of the things of this world.

Thus, then, our Saviour left them at their place[17] and went back to pray, and repeated for the third time the words He had said the first and the second time, to teach us that we must pray thrice and many times until we are heard, that we must persevere in calling at the gates of the divine mercy until we obtain our petitions, and that we must remain all the longer in prayer in proportion as the distress we feel is greater. And our Saviour suffered such great distress during His third prayer, that St. Luke terms it agony, which properly means combat and struggle, to signify that conflict which Christ our Lord suffered within Himself. The recollection and vivid representation of His death, armed with the will and commandment of the Eternal Father, struggled with the natural feeling of His holy Humanity, which rejected and fled from that death, and on the other hand His Spirit, ready and full of strength, animated the weak flesh to accept death and resign itself to the will of God. During this struggle and agony, as the Evangelist says, our Saviour[18] prayed still longer and

[15] St. Matt. xxvi. 43. [16] St. Mark xiv. 40. [17] St. Matt. xxvi. 44. [18] St. Luke xxii. 43.

more earnestly. And as it is natural in such struggles that the blood collects itself from the other limbs, leaving them cold, and crowds round the heart to support it, how could our Saviour have sweated that blood through His veins except that He had made so heroic and generous an effort to cast away His fear, that the blood collected round His Heart was thereby sent forth with so much force that His veins were too small for it, and so opened themselves, and gave free course through the pores to those drops of blood which ran down upon the ground? And if this was so, the bloody sweat did not arise from fear, but from greatness of soul; although it is true that it might proceed also from vehement distress and anguish, for as these, in many cases cause sweating, so may they when they are very violent, particularly when the blood is delicate, in like manner be the cause of sweating blood also. However this may be, our Saviour desired to give us this outward mark of the strife and agony which passed within Him, and to show more clearly the greatness of the resignation with which He offered Himself to the will of the Father in a matter so difficult that the mere imagination of it made Him sweat blood.

Again, His agony increased while He was in prayer, and His prayer also increased while He was in agony. He prayed longer and more fervently, entreating His Eternal Father with all humility and resignation, that if it were possible this chalice might pass from Him, and that He might be spared so bitter a draught, but that nevertheless His holy will should be done in all things. And we may believe that all the angels of heaven were lost in profound admiration, beholding the Son of God, Who, with so much agony and so much reverence, prayed thrice to His Eternal Father for nothing less than for His life, and that He might be spared death, a death of so much ignominy and suffering. And all prostrate before God (as they saw that Most Beloved Son and their own Lord prostrate) they awaited the sentence which that petition would receive before the tribunal and in the presence of His Father, and whether that death would take place or not; and whether the

sword with which the head of the Son was threatened would be returned, without shedding blood, to its sheath, as had been done of old with the sword of Abraham.

Then God declared in His Court to all the celestial spirits that His determined will was that His Son should die, and that He accepted His prayer, as to the offer which He made with so much resignation, namely, that without regarding His own desires and natural feelings, He should execute on Him His eternal counsel and holy will. He announced to them also that by this means He willed to magnify His justice and mercy, and to give light to the world, salvation to the lost, to forgive their sins and satisfy His honour which had been outraged. And all the angels and blessed spirits adored with profound reverence His Sovereign Majesty, and saw revealed to them a new proof of His infinite wisdom and incomprehensible goodness.

And as humble and persevering prayer never returns empty from the gates of God, so, albeit His Divine Majesty did not alter the decree which He had established before all ages with regard to the death of His Son, nevertheless, He so far granted His prayer as to send an angel from heaven,[19] who in visible form should speak with and strengthen Him. Yet by what arguments could he comfort and console Him, seeing that our Lord knew all that could give Him courage in this extremity, and that the angel could teach Him nothing which He did not already know? For what else could the angel say to Him which was better or so good as what our Saviour Himself, with the same end of comforting them, had already said to His disciples after the Last Supper? But our most merciful Saviour, Who of His own will had chosen to be made sorrowful for our healing, chose also for that time to put aside from His memory the consideration of those things which might have given Him some relief, that so His holy Humanity might suffer more entirely without consolation, and might be comforted by the angel. He likewise gave us therein a new example of humility, permitting Himself to be consoled and encouraged by

[19] St. Luke xxii. 43.

the ministry of the angel, who presented to Him from without and brought back as it were to His memory the reasons He had for readily accepting that chalice of bitterness, thus teaching us that if in our own troubles we do not find in ourselves that consolation which we give to others in theirs, we should be content to receive it from any one whom our Lord may send us.

Our Lord having finished His prayer,[20] rose from the earth where he had been kneeling or lying prostrate, and, as we may believe, He wiped the bloody sweat from His face before returning to His disciples, who, after having been warned and reproved the first time for their drowsiness, and visited the second time and found sleeping and unable to answer anything in their own defence, had fallen asleep the third time without being able to watch in prayer with their Master. Then, finding them asleep through weariness and sorrow, He roused them with grave and gentle irony, saying,[21] 'Sleep on now and take your rest!' As though He had said, 'A fitting time this, and a good place, and a suitable occasion certainly, for sleep! the earth frozen, the night dark, the air icy, enemies at hand who are coming to take Me! Sleep and rest, if you can; hitherto I have asked you to watch with Me, to keep Me company; now, however, as far as I am concerned, sleep on, if you will, for however much you wish it, you will not be able.' And then with words full of feeling and gravity, He said,[22] 'Come, it is enough. What, you are asleep! see that now it is no longer time for sleep, for the hour is come when I am to be delivered into the hands of most wicked and evil men.'

It must not be forgotten that among His other griefs, our Lord at this time felt most acutely the wrong done to Him by the Apostle who had sold Him. For although the iniquity of the Jews grieved Him, the malice of Judas wounded Him far more, and that He was sold, not by any of His disciples, but by one of the Twelve who was His Apostle and His companion, and who had daily eaten with Him. Neither had He been sold at any great price, but only for the sum which they

[20] St. Luke xxii. 45. [21] St. Matt. xxvi. 45. [22] St. Mark xiv. 41.

had been willing to give; for the wretched man had merely asked,[23] 'What will you give me if I deliver Him up to you?' And there had been no agreement exacted beyond the promise which they had been ready to make. Our Lord did not seek to conceal the feeling which this wrong had caused Him, and thus, when He aroused His disciples, He said, 'What, do you sleep? He who is to betray Me is at hand.'[24] 'He is not asleep; He has not failed a jot in diligence and carefulness. Come, then, let us arise and go hence, and without showing any weakness, let us set out with courage to meet those who are coming in search of us.'

Our Blessed Lord taught us in this two things. First, that prayer always has good effects, and that no man ever comes from before the presence of God empty. For though He may not obtain consolation (even as our Saviour could not obtain it, but anguish and discomfort), still he gains good courage and strength to suffer and overcome any difficulties and temptations whatsoever. Secondly, that whilst it is indeed necessary to pour out our hearts, open our griefs, and to represent our repugnances and fears in the sight of God, as our Saviour did, and as David when he said,[25] *Effundo in conspectu ejus orationem meam et tribulationem meam ante ipsum pronuntio*—'In His sight I pour out my prayers, and before Him I declare my trouble,' still, when the time for trouble comes, we must show a bold face and good courage before the men or the demons who persecute us.

[23] St. Matt. xxvi. 15. [24] St. Mark xiv. 42. [25] Psalm cxli. 3.

CHAPTER X.

Our Saviour is betrayed and seized.

When the false Apostle, Judas, under the instigation of the devil, had left the supper room and separated himself from the other disciples, he set himself in all diligence to make arrangements for the seizure of our Saviour. He went from house to house, to the Chief Priests and heads of the Synagogue, offering now to fulfil the promise he had made, describing the opportunity that had now come to hand, and explaining the plan and order they should follow so that our Lord might not escape them. And as Judas did not believe in Him,[1] but looked upon Him as a deceiver and impostor, he took all possible precautions that his project might not fail. Accordingly, he arranged with the Governor for a party of the soldiers of his guard,[2] and those who put the number lowest say that he had one hundred and twenty-five soldiers. And this number seeming to them small, the Priests and Pharisees ordered that their own servants should also go with them, that they might swell the body of the armed men, and give assistance should it prove necessary. But that the enterprize might not fail on account of the absence of chiefs and officers in command, they determined that there should be present some of the Chief Priests,[3] among whom were persons of much authority, and who in past years had themselves been High Priests. And to give the affair greater importance, they were accompanied by several officers of the Temple, who had charge, some of the building, others of the property, others of the sacrifices and offerings and the like. All these men went well armed[4] and prepared for whatever

[1] St. John vi. 65. [2] *Ibid.* xviii. 3. [3] St. Luke xxii. 52. [4] St. Matt. xxvi. 47.

might happen, some with hangers and swords, and others less well armed with staves and sticks. They also carried with them lanterns and torches,[5] to light their path and to prevent our Saviour from hiding Himself from them in the darkness. From the number of people collected together and the great preparations which were made, it is easy to see how great was the energy manifested by Judas, and how much noise and tumult there was in the city. For if we consider well we find that quite an army was collected of all kinds of people, of Jews and of Gentiles, of servants and free, of clergy and laymen, of men of war and men of peace, in order that all might share in the taking of Him through Whom all have to obtain liberty.

Of all this troop Judas made himself the captain, for St. Luke says[6] 'that he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went in the first place before them,' and in the Acts of the Apostles[7] it is written that Judas was the leader of them that took Jesus. This office Judas exactly performed in many ways. For he it was who first chose the night time, to avoid the tumult and resistance which might be made by the multitudes who followed and accompanied our Saviour, and by this he satisfied the fears of the priests, who, to prevent any disturbance arising among the people, had wished to postpone the taking of Jesus until after the feast of the Pasch. Secondly, he made choice of a place outside the city, and in the country, where our Saviour might be found alone, and more out of reach of those who might have favoured His cause. For the traitor well knew the place,[8] because Jesus was wont often to resort thither, together with His disciples, seeking the quiet and solitude to pray there and to discourse with His disciples concerning the more hidden and secret mysteries. For certainly Judas would have gone to His house to look for Him if he had thought that He was sleeping at that hour, whereas he went to seek Him in the Garden, because he knew He would be there to pray. Thirdly, he provided the soldiers with lanterns and torches and arms — the lanterns on account of the darkness of the night, and that if our Saviour should try to hide Himself in the fields and take

[5] St. John xviii. 3. [6] xxii. 47. [7] i. 16. [8] St. John xviii. 2.

flight, they might make search for Him and take Him. So much did that Eternal Light hide Itself in our mortal flesh, that the powers of darkness went out to seek for It with lanterns! The arms were intended to inspire terror, and to prevent any one from venturing to make resistance, and, if that were attempted, that they might fight with them and keep possession of their prisoner. Fourthly, Judas gave them the sign, whereby they might not only know the person of our Saviour, but also the time when they were to surround Him in order to take Him, and this it belongs to the leader to do. The signal which he gave them was the common and ordinary salutation customary among friends, namely, a kiss on the face, and herein Judas was a traitor, because—false and double man as he was—he had a double and deceitful purpose in this, first to deliver the victim to them, and secondly to conceal himself from his Master, and to join the company of the other Apostles, as though he had come from doing some other business, without letting it be known that he had a part in this evil deed. Fifthly, he exhorted them, saying :[9] *Quemcumque osculatus fuero, ipse est, tenete eum, et ducite caute*—'Whomsoever I shall kiss that is He, hold Him fast and take Him away carefully.' As if to say—As it is night, and many of you who are coming do not know Him, and He is a person of that sort that it would not be much for Him to play us a trick and escape our hands, therefore let nothing be done till I give the signal. The one to Whom I shall go up and kiss Him in the face, that is He ; draw near to Him quickly and seize Him and take Him off, cautiously and with great care, that He may not escape you by means of some evil art, and that the people, who have Him in devotion, may not rescue Him. After this fashion had Judas taken most watchful heed in that his treasonable plot whilst the other disciples were sleeping over their prayers. And in this we also see that if those who are in a state of perfection are not very good, they ordinarily reach, like Judas, the very extremity of wickedness.

Then the troop began to march in good order towards the Mount of Olives. The soldiers of the guard were there,[10] and

[9] St. Matt. xxvi. 48 ; St. Mark xiv 44. [10] St. John xviii. 12.

their captain with them, and many of the Chief Priests and officers of the Temple, and elders of the people and men of authority, accompanied by their servants and attendants, and other people who followed them. They carried with them, as we have said, torches and lanterns, in the light of which the arms gleamed, and Judas went before them all with as much pomp as if they had come forth to bring peace to the land, and to take captive some robber, or chief of brigands. They arrived at Gethsemani at the time when our Saviour, after having prayed the third time,[11] was in conversation with His disciples.

On this occasion our Lord was pleased to make a manifestation of His Divinity, and of the freewill with which He was delivering Himself up for our sakes. Although His enemies had a guide and a signal by which to recognize Him, although they had so large a force to apprehend Him, and though Judas was desirous to dissemble and conceal his evil purpose beneath false demonstrations of friendship, yet after all neither did they recognize Him till He made Himself known to them, nor did they lay hold of Him until He allowed Himself to be taken, nor was Judas able to conceal himself by mingling with the rest of the Apostles, as it appears that he intended. For, first, when Judas was now near at hand, our Saviour arose [12] to meet them in the path, and then Judas, with diabolical daring, pretending that he was a friend and a disciple, and not an enemy and a traitor, saluted Him, saying—'Hail, Master!'[13] giving Him the kiss of peace, thus using the sign of love as the instrument of his treachery. But our most gentle Lord, Who was peaceful with those who abhorred peace,[14] did not disdain to receive that kiss from the mouth of Judas, not only that He might thereby give an instance of His incomprehensible gentleness, but also that He might show that it was of His own will that He delivered Himself up, since He did not refuse the signal which the traitor had given. It was also to draw to Himself that man possessed by the devil, seeing that He did not deny to him the mark of peace; and to correct by His

[11] St. Matt. xxvi. 46. [12] *Ibid.* [13] *Ibid.* 49; St. Mark xiv. 45.
[14] Psalm cxix. 7.

breath, as his Divine Saviour, the poison which Judas bore in his own, as they joined in that mutual embrace which proceeded from two hearts so different one from the other.

And, not to lose any opportunity of doing good to one who was doing evil to Him, our Lord, after having given him that token of love, admonished Judas in words of great sweetness and gentleness, not such as the gravity of the crime required, but rather such as the condition of the poor wretch allowed, calling him by his own name (which is a sign of kindness), and showing him the heinousness of his evil deed. And this He did, not speaking strongly or reprehending him, but asking him a question, which is a token of courtesy and love, saying to him:[15] *Juda, osculo Filium hominis tradis?*—'Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' As if to say—Dost thou make war upon Me with signs of peace? Dost thou deliver Me up to death with marks of love? Can the disciple act thus to his Master, and the servant to his Lord? Then, to move him more to recognize his own crime, He put another question to him, in words as strong and as loving as before[16]—'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' Friend, not that thou art, but that thou hast been—and because thou hast been such, the greater is the evil thou art doing Me, and the greater the pain and the grief which thou causest Me: *Quia si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique*, etc.—'For if my enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it,' &c.[17]—friend as thou hast been, and as thou oughtest still to be, and as thou still mayest be, as far as it depends on Me—for I am well disposed to be thy Friend, not because thou dost wish for My friendship, not because thy deeds merit the name, but because My love requires this, and the work that I do for thee, as if thou wast My friend—therefore, friend, what is this design thou hast in hand, and what is the enterprize thou hast come here to accomplish? Judas was doubtless greatly disturbed on perceiving that his treason was so manifest to the eyes of his Master. He was astonished and confused at His gentle manner, and as his evil conscience did not permit him to

[15] St. Luke xxii. 48. [16] St. Matt. xxvi. 50. [17] Psalm liv. 13.

mingle amongst the other Apostles and his fellow-disciples, he went back towards the soldiers and servants who had come there with him.[18] But, although Judas had given them the signal which had been agreed upon, they did not move from their place or recognize our Saviour, because the capture was not to be made at their will and as they chose, but as our Lord had destined and ordained that it should be.

After having said these words in the order here set forth,[19] our Saviour, seeing that Judas had withdrawn himself, and that the soldiers did not approach Him,[20] knowing all that was to happen, and yet, as He was to suffer of His own freewill, not desirous to hide Himself or to fly, went to meet them on the way, and said—'Whom seek ye?' But they were so blinded that they did not see Him though He stood before them, and though Judas was with them for the very purpose of making Him known, still He did not manifest Himself, nor did they recognize Him, and so they spoke to Him as to a third person, saying—'We seek Jesus of Nazareth.' Then, now that they were convinced that all their cares, and the precautions they had taken, had turned out in vain, and that they had been able neither to apprehend Him nor even recognize Him, Jesus made Himself known to them, saying—'I am He.' And His voice was so full of majesty, and of so great terror and fear to those ministers of iniquity that, as if it had been a thunderbolt, they turned backwards and fell to the ground, and Judas with them, involved in the same misery with those of whom he was the guide. This fall was a lively representation of that by which the Synagogue fell on that day, a fall so terrible that with it they lost also the Kingdom, the Scriptures, the Temple, the sacrifices, and finally, even the being named the chosen people of God. And it has been a fall so difficult to recover from, that from that day to the present there has been no rising again.

What courage and joy must have animated the souls of the Apostles at seeing the might of their leader, who, on the very first encounter, caused a whole troop by a single word to

[18] St. John xviii. 5. [19] St. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* l. iii. c. 5.
[20] St. John xviii. 4. [21] *Ibid.* 5.

draw back and fall to the ground! Where was then the captain with his cohort? Where was the pride and bravery of the soldiers? Where the fear and terror of their arms? It was God Himself Who spoke. How will it be when He comes to judge, since, when He was going to be judged, He gave so great a manifestation of His power and majesty?

During the whole time that His enemies were lying prostrate on the ground, our Saviour remained standing without stirring from His place, and when at last they arose He reproached them once more with their weakness, and asked them—'Whom seek ye?' It might have been expected that, after so evident a miracle, they would have recognized Jesus, and would have sought Him to adore Him and to serve Him. But since, after they had been warned and chastised, these men still persevered (as many do) in their evil will to seize Him, so also their blindness still continued, and they answered, with the same perturbation as before, 'We seek Jesus of Nazareth.' Then our Lord, pointing out the perplexity and blindness in which they were, answered saying—'I have told you that I am He.' And, that He might give a proof of the love and solicitude which He felt for His friends, even unto death, and manifest also His empire and power over His enemies, He added,[22] 'If therefore ye seek Me, observe that I command you to molest not one of these My friends, but let them freely go their way.' Which words were words of command and not of entreaty, for our Lord well knew that His enemies were not disposed to do what He might ask of them, and therefore He commanded them and bound fast their hands. For if He had not so bound them, how would St. Peter have been able to go out of the Garden, and to pass in freedom through such an array of soldiers, after having been so bold as to wound the servant of the High Priest? But they heard the mandate and obeyed it, because of the power of our Lord, Who, when speaking to His Eternal Father, had said,[23] 'Father, those whom Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but Judas, as it was prophesied of him in the Scriptures, who has been lost by his own fault.'

[22] St. John xviii. 8. [23] *Ibid.* xvii. 12.

The attack which Peter made, as we have just mentioned, took place in the following manner. Amongst the rest who came with that troop was a servant of the High Priest, named[24] Malchus, who, perhaps, from what he had heard said in his master's house, was less inclined than others to respect our Lord, and had greater malice against Him, and thought that no one had a greater right than he, who belonged to the household of the Pontiff, to be first in this business. So then, when our Saviour made Himself known, Malchus pressed forward to lay hands on Him with greater quickness and daring than others, and the disciples, seeing that the thing was going too far, said,[25] 'Lord, is the time and moment come? Wilt Thou that we use our swords?' For they had brought with them[26] two swords, or daggers, at least. But while they were asking leave of our Lord, St. Peter, without waiting His reply,[27] closed with the servant of the High Priest, and struck him a blow on the head, which glanced off, perhaps, from the head-piece on which it fell, and struck the right ear and cut it off Such was the fervour of St. Peter, and the zeal which he had to defend his Master.

But our Saviour saw the disorderly and indiscreet defence which the Apostle had undertaken, and that no other result could follow except that of making it appear that He was going to meet His death against His will, since He endeavoured to defend Himself by the weapons of His Apostles. But He had Himself always taken care to show the exact contrary; and therefore this Divine Lord, the Peacemaker of heaven and earth, set Himself to reconcile the combatants, and to prevent the rest of the Apostles from preparing to follow the example of Peter, said to them, 'It is enough, do no more, go no further in this; let vengeance be at end, for now is the time for patience only.' Then, remembering His accustomed compassion, and also that He might remove all occasion of their being troubled, and that there might be no cause for putting them to death as having resisted justice, but rather, on the

[24] St. John xviii. 10. [25] St. Luke xxii. 49. [26] *Ibid.* 38.
[27] St. John xviii. 10.

other hand, to put the others under an obligation by a new benefit, and to win their hearts by a new proof of His goodness, He drew near to the wounded man, and, touching his ear, healed it. Such was the charity of our Lord, which burned brightly in the midst of many waters and lorded it over everything in the midst of the hatred of His enemies! And at the same time it inspires us with hope that we shall receive from His hand the healing of the wounds which have been inflicted on us by sin, and such healing as to repair all the hurt that has come to us for having waged war against Him. And all this as a proof of His ineffable goodness and mercy.

Then, that He might be Himself in all things, after having cured the bodily wound of the enemy, He set Himself to enlighten the ignorance of the disciple, and to give evidence by His own word of the goodwill with which He offered Himself up to death that he might fulfil the will of His Father, and accomplish that which had been prophesied of Him in the Scriptures. It was also His desire to strike, by the way, the hearts of the Jews, by setting before them the penalty and chastisement to which they were subjecting themselves by seeking to put Him to death unjustly. Therefore, in presence of them all, he said to St. Peter,[28] 'Put up again, Peter, thy sword into its place; this is not the time wherein to defend ourselves by arms, although our enemies are so unjustly attacking us with theirs; for of a truth I say unto you' (and the others also heard Him), 'that he who takes the sword in hand against justice and without lawful authority, incurs the penalty that he shall himself perish thereby. And as for Me, I do not desire at this time to flee from death, but to accept it with the utmost willingness and love, for I do not look on it as inflicted on Me by these men's hands, but as willed and ordained by My Father. The chalice which My Father hath given me, do you desire that I should not drink it? It is quite sufficient that it should be given by such a hand, in order that I should look upon it as sweet, and that I should drink it with thirst and with desire. And if I should require defence, what

[28] St. Matt. xxvi. 52.

necessity have I of yours, so weak, few, and unarmed as ye are;[29] since I have only to open My mouth[30] and ask My Father, and He will send Me here at once, instead of eleven men that you are, more than twelve legions of angels, who will assist in My defence and service? But I am not now about to defend Myself, nor is this which you now see happen to Me a new and unthought of thing to Me, for many ages ago the holy Prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit, foretold it, and that it was meet that thus it should be. And if I were to set Myself to offer resistance, how could the Scriptures be fulfilled?

It is much to be considered, that in whatever manner they had taken Christ our Lord, even if it had been with the observance and respect due to His Person, it would still have been a matter of much dishonour and pain, seeing He was a Person of so much authority, and so well known and revered throughout all that land for His sermons, His miracles, and His excellent virtues. All this had kept them under restraint in the course of His preaching; for although they had many times[31] sought means and ways to lay hands on Him, they had never dared to do so through fear of the people, who held and revered Him as a prophet. And this being so, they had come forth on this occasion to take Him, not as a prophet, nor as a good man, but as though He had been a criminal and a thief, and One Whom it was therefore necessary to take by force. Nor was this outrage so small, or so little felt by our Lord, that He chose to conceal it and be silent about it, though He dissembled so many and so grievous outrages in His Passion. And yet He was so calm and self-possessed, that in that hour[32] when His enemies were surrounding Him with so much violence, He set Himself to reason with them, and declared to them what He felt at their treatment of Him, and how in all that they were doing they were acting under disturbance and in darkness. Therefore He spoke to the multitudes who were there, and more especially to those[33] of the Chief Priests and officers of the Temple and the elders of the people who had come, saying

[29] St. John xviii. 11. [30] St. Matt. xxvi. 53. [31] *Ibid.* xxi. 46.
[32] *Ibid.* xxvi. 55. [33] St. Luke xxii. 52.

to them, 'You have come forth from the city to seek and take Me with an armed force, with swords and spears, with torches and lanterns, and with a guide and a leader who might know Me and discover Me to you, as though I were a thief and a robber, as if I would go about the country doing evil and would hide myself in caves and in deserts. But it is not so, since continually and every day (so to speak) I was amongst you in public, and with all openness and easiness of access in the Temple and in the city where is your seat of government and of justice. Wherefore do you come forth into the country to seek Him Whom ye had within the city? Wherefore come with arms and soldiers to Him Who was walking peaceably in the midst of you? Wherefore was it requisite to have recourse to an informer in order to discover One Who taught publicly in the Temple? But at that time, when I was so close at hand, you have not dared to lay hands on Me, because I did not will it, and now that you have made all this uproar to dishonour Me, as though I were a thief, you would be no more able to lay hands on Me than before if I did not will it and give you permission. But your hour has arrived,[34] and it is this present hour, in which power over Me is given to you and to the prince of darkness, who is inciting you.'

By these words which our Saviour spoke, and by the permission which He gave them, the evil spirits, and the Jews their ministers, found themselves set free and at liberty to do their will in all things. Then all of them at once, that is to say,[35] the captain and his band and the rest of the people and servants of the Jews, laid hands on Jesus and took Him. They had brought with them ropes and chains, and so taking all the precautions which Judas had recommended,[36] they bound Him tightly with them. Yes, they bound the author of freedom, and, perchance, there were many amongst them who were afterwards freed by Him, and said,[37] *Dirupisti Domine, vincula mea, tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis*—'Thou hast broken my bonds, I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise.' The seizure was made

[34] St. Luke xxii. 53. [35] St. John xviii. 12. [36] *Ibid.*
[37] Psalm cxv. 16, 17.

with great violence and rudeness, both in word and act, for St. Matthew says[38] that they laid hands on Him. Then the multitude broke out into shouts as loud as those which conquerors raise when they have carried off the spoil, and Judas returned, talking with the priests and magistrates, being well content with the success which had attended his efforts and diligence, though it had been better for him had he never been born. The Apostles, scandalized and disturbed at seeing what was taking place, and conjecturing thence what might follow, were filled with apprehension and fear, and forgetting all the offers they had made after the Supper, now that the occasion had come,[39] they all forsook Him and fled.

So great was the tumult made by those who laid hands on our Saviour,[40] that a young man with a linen cloth on him, and half naked, who was near at hand, came up at the noise, and when they began to lay hold of him, he left the linen cloth in their hands and fled from them naked as he was. So it often happens that men suffer more for fleeing from the Cross of Jesus Christ than they would suffer in following it. And though nothing more is required from us in order to be perfect than that we should leave all things and follow in nakedness the naked Jesus; still, in order not to follow Him nor to share in His Passion, we give into the hands of despoilers that which we are not willing to leave for Him, and are bereft of all that is temporal whilst flying from what is eternal.

The Apostles having dispersed by different roads, found their way together to the house on Zion, whence they had gone forth, and told the Blessed Mother of our Lord all that had taken place in the Garden, and of the state in which they had left her Son, giving her thereby matter for bitter grief, for sublime contemplation, and most perfect conformity to the will of God.

[38] xxvi. 50. [39] *Ibid.* 56. [40] St. Mark xiv. 51.

CHAPTER XI.

Our Saviour is brought before the Priests and accused.

THE meek and gentle Lamb being now in the hands of those cruel wolves, they brought Him out of the Garden whither He had retired to pray, and passing a second time over the brook Cedron, after having first bound and fastened His hands, they took Him along the road to Jerusalem, with loud cries and shoutings, and so dragging Him by the neck they forced Him along the road, with far greater haste than became His modesty and gravity. He fell very often, and was then made to rise with blows and pushes as if He were a thief. The path which they followed led to the house of Caiaphas,[1] who was the High Priest of the Synagogue, and supreme ecclesiastical judge of the Jewish people. He was, moreover, President over that supreme and most ancient Council called the Sanhedrin, and which consisted of seventy-one judges, who with the High Priest who presided numbered seventy-two councillors. And if we recall to mind that when Judas went out of the supper chamber it was already night,[2] and that after he had left it our Saviour made a long discourse after supper, and then went to the Garden, where three several times He made a long prayer, and if we also remember all that took place at the time of His apprehension, it is very evident that by the time the soldiers returned to the city with their prisoner and went to the house of the High Priest it must have been about midnight. Yet, notwithstanding this, those old judges and the elders of the people were so carried away by their passion that, without any respect to what became their age or their character, they had

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 57. [2] St. John xiii. 30.

met at that hour in council that no moment might be lost, and that the cause might not suffer from want of diligence.

Thus, then, the great High Priest of the New Testament entered Jerusalem to offer His life as a sacrifice acceptable to God for the redemption of all the world, and to put an end to the law and to the ancient sacrifices and priesthood. The trial began in the house of the High Priest,[3] where the other priests and the lawyers had gathered together to await Him, but the soldiers and servants who had taken Him captive went first[4] to the house of Annas, because he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year. In doing this our Lord underwent great humiliation, allowing Himself to be taken, bound and in chains, with so much of tumult and ignominy, to the houses of the father and of the son-in-law, that at the cost of His honour and authority they might pay honour and court to these evil priests. But Annas, as soon as they had brought Him to his house, sent Him[5] bound, as He came, to Caiaphas, who was the High Priest, and to whom the cause appertained. This Caiaphas was the same who in the Council had advised the Jews[6] that it was expedient that one man should die for the safety of all. And now he who had given this counsel was ready to put it into execution, and all the things which are recounted of this night took place in his house.

Although, at the time of the taking of Jesus, when He was in the Garden, all the disciples who were with Him[7] fled and forsook their Master, St. Peter, nevertheless, impelled by his fervour and devotion, could not remain quiet,[8] and followed Him to see what came of His arrest, though he followed Him afar off on account of the fear which had taken possession of him. There was also another of the disciples who went after our Lord[9]—whether it were St. John, as some say, or as others think, and with greater probability, some citizen of Jerusalem of those who followed His teaching, and who, being in a higher rank of life, was acquainted with the High Priest. Our Saviour, then, entered the house of Caiaphas attended by

[3] St. Mark xiv. 53. [4] St. John xviii. 13. [5] *Ibid.* 24. [6] *Ibid.* 14.
[7] St. Matt. xxvi. 56. [8] *Ibid.* 58. [9] St. John xviii. 15.

the tumultuous multitude which had come forth with Him from the Garden, and others who, attracted by the uproar, had joined the crowd as it passed through the streets. It is probable that as soon as they had brought Him into the house, the captain and the Roman soldiers, who had been the principal force used in the capture and guarding the prisoner, were dismissed, well paid and satisfied. Entrance into the house having been denied to the rest of the crowd who, desiring to know what was passing, had made obstinate efforts to get inside the doors, and all who did not belong to the house, and who were not servants of those who were within, having been dismissed, the judges remained with the prisoner with closed doors. But on account of its being night, and also for the better guarding of the house, and in order that the proceedings might be conducted with greater security, the door was watched by a female servant belonging to the house. In spite of all this, that other disciple, being known in the house of the High Priest, entered in without hindrance,[10] whilst Peter remained outside at the door. When the other disciple who had gone in saw this, he spoke to the servant at the door and asked her to let Peter in with him. Thus it was that he met with some one able to bestow this favour on him, and to help him to enter the palace, where, because Truth was so persecuted, he denied it, and then came forth with matter over which to shed bitter tears throughout the rest of his life.

Our Saviour having been brought before the High Priest, and St. Peter and the other disciple who were witnesses of all that took place that night, being also in the hall, the High Priest began to examine into the cause against our Saviour judicially before those other priests and lawyers who had met together there. For although they intended to convoke another full and legitimate Council the first thing in the morning, the High Priest desired to begin that very night to enter into the affair and to see what aspects it bore, and what articles and proofs there were against the prisoner, that he might arrange His accusation, and put Him to death as he desired. More-

[10] St. John xviii. 16.

over, as the High Priest held Him to be a disturber and deceiver of the people, and One Who preached falsehoods against the law and ancient traditions, he examined Him first of all on two points.[11] The first had regard to the disciples—who they were, how many, where they were, and to what end He had assembled them together. The second had respect to the doctrine which He taught, to see whether he could find any falsehood or calumny to bring against it.

To the first question, as to His disciples, our Saviour answered nothing, for as they had all been scandalized and had fled, and as Peter was there present so disturbed and full of fear, what could He have answered that would have served for their defence or to their honour? But especially as to the object with which the High Priest questioned Him it was enough to answer respecting His doctrine, for if that was good and coming from God, He could not have gathered His disciples for an evil purpose. Therefore, passing over the first question, He replied to the second,[12] saying—'I have spoken publicly and openly to the whole world; you may suspect a doctrine to be false and pernicious when it is taught in the dark and in corners, but I always, or nearly always, and ordinarily, have preached in the synagogue and in the Temple where the Jews meet together, and I have not said anything hidden or in secret. For, although I have sometimes spoken alone with My disciples in order to explain to them more plainly, as to persons who are better capable of understanding, what I have taught the people in parables and similitudes, I say, nevertheless, that I have taught nothing in secret, since the things I have taught in secret were not different from or foreign to what I have preached in public;[13] nor did I impart them to My disciples that they might keep them secret, but rather that through their means they might be published to all the world.' Such ought to be the words and the works of those who are teachers of truth, that they may appear in full light before God and men. 'It being thus, wherefore do you inquire of Me respecting My doctrine, seeing that you have it in your

[11] St. John xviii. 19. [12] *Ibid.* 20. [13] St. Matt. x. 27.

power to inquire of so many whose answers you would consider to be more truthful and less suspicious than Mine? Obtain information yourself, if you will, from those who have heard Me, for they will know what are the things which I have taught.'

This reply, so full of truth and firmness as it was, and given with so much gentleness and sincerity, was taken amiss by one of the attendants who was present, it seeming to him that it charged the High Priest with having asked an indiscreet and inopportune question; and desiring to flatter the High Priest, and to insult and punish our Lord before the whole of the Council and of the rest who were there present, he exclaimed,[14] 'Answerest Thou the High Priest so?' As if he had said—'Despicable and insolent Man, dost Thou dare to speak to the High Priest with such freedom and impertinence?' And so saying, he raised his sacrilegious hand—which was moved by the whole weight of our sins—and struck our Saviour on His sacred face.

Although He had received so great an injury at the hands of a worthless man, in so public a place, and before the priests and lawyers and the principal persons of the Synagogue, our Saviour maintained His accustomed calm and dignity, and with that same composure, gentleness, and simplicity which He had shown in answering the High Priest, He addressed Himself to this man who had so foully outraged Him. For He deemed that on this occasion, when the injury was so recent, to pass it over altogether in silence would not show the same degree of humility as would be manifested if He justified Himself with so much gentleness and meekness to one who did not deserve it. Besides, as this man had not only insulted His Person, but had also reproached Him with His answer, He would not keep silence as to this second point, because it would have been to the detriment of the truth of His doctrine in defence of which He had answered. And He gave him in passing to understand how much greater had been the want of respect which he himself had shown to the High Priest, by putting his hands on the prisoner in his presence only because he had answered

[14] St. John xviii. 22.

for himself. But how violent must have been the fury of the High Priest himself, since he passed over the insult offered to himself on account of the pleasure which he received from the insult done to another? For if the inquiry was to be conducted without passion, the servant had nothing to do but to give his testimony of the evil, and the judge nothing but to hear and to give sentence. So our Saviour said to the man—'If in My answer, or in the doctrine I have taught, there be anything evil or worthy of apprehension, point it out. If now, or at any time, I have spoken evil, give testimony of it before the High Priest, since he is here present. But if both now and at other times I have always spoken well, why strikest thou Me?' As though He had said—'Give some other reason for having struck Me, but do not say it is because I have spoken ill.'

'What answer,' says St. Augustine,[15] 'could be more true or more gentle, or more complete in its justification, and more reasonable? If we consider Who it is that received the buffet, how can we help wishing for fire to be sent from heaven to burn up him who gave it; or that the earth should open and swallow him up, or some devils seize him and tear him in pieces, and that he should have been at once chastised with these punishments, or with others greater still? Which also of these punishments might not our Lord, Who created the world, have sent on that sacrilegious man as a punishment, if He had not wished to teach us that patience by which the world is conquered? And if any one should ask wherefore He did not offer him the other cheek after he had wounded Him on the one, as He had taught?[16] the answer to this is, that not only was He ready to give the other cheek to him who had struck the one, but to give His whole Body also, that it might be nailed upon the Cross. But He teaches us here that those commandments of evangelical and perfect patience are not so much to be fulfilled by a vain outward bodily ostentation, as by the humble preparation of the heart within us. For it may easily happen that he who offers the other cheek may do it in a very angry frame of mind, when it would be much better

[15] *Tract* cxiii. *in John.* [16] St. Matt. v. 39.

that he should answer the truth in sincerity, with calmness, and be ready with a quiet mind to suffer still greater injuries.' All this is from St. Augustine.

Had this trial been conducted with justice and equity, our Saviour would have gained by that reply of His, that if good, it would have been accepted, and if evil, that it would have been refuted, and He convicted. But as the trial was all perverted, and the judges inflamed with passion, and all the Council determined to put Him to death, through envy and ambition,[17] and through the fears they had conceived that the Romans would come and destroy their people and Temple, and as the very holding of the trial itself was only to give colour to their malice, therefore they sought and solicited false witnesses,[18] desiring to obtain from them some evidence, even though false, which might be sufficient to enable them to condemn Him to death upon it. But the life and teaching of our Saviour had been such that there was no means of inventing what they desired, although they sought for it with so much diligence. For though many, to ingratiate themselves with the Chief Priests, or else on account of the promises or threats which were made to them, offered themselves to say what they could, yet some of them spoke in one way, and some in another, and all of them gave false testimony. What, indeed, could they say but the same things which they had falsely and maliciously whispered against Him during His life? Such as that He had made a compact with the devil, that He had broken the festivals, that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, that He consorted with publicans and sinners, that He fomented tumults among the people, that He taught them not to pay tribute to kings, and, finally, that He was a blasphemer, and called Himself the Son of God. Although it be true that they afterwards made use of this evidence, now of one and now of another, as most served their purpose, to bring the case to an end, and to overcome the Governor and lead him to pronounce sentence of death, it was easy to be seen[19] that the

[17] St. John xi. 53.

[18] St. Matt. xxvi. 59; St. Mark xiv. 55.

[19] St. Mark xiv. 56.

testimonies were not sufficient, since neither did they agree together, nor were they themselves such and so well approved as to be convincing enough to be grounds for the sentence of death which these men aimed at.

At last witnesses arose who said[20]—'We have heard this Man say,[21] I can destroy and I will destroy this your Temple, built by the hands of men and the industry and labour of workmen, and within three days I will build and set on foot another, not made with hands.' This testimony was manifestly false; first, because our Saviour had not said that He could destroy, still less, that He would destroy, the Temple,[22] but that after they had destroyed it He would set it up again; secondly, because He did not speak of the material Temple,[23] but of the temple of His Body, giving them to understand that after they had taken His life, He would rise again on the third day. But they, in order to distort the sense, and to show that He had spoken of the material Temple, added these words—'I will destroy this Temple made with hands, and then I will build another made without hands,' &c. This, therefore, was false testimony, concocted by them in malice, for they changed and added to the words which our Saviour had uttered, and perverted the meaning and intention with which He had spoken as seemed to them convenient, in order to make Him hateful to the people, and to furnish a better pretext to the judges to condemn Him. Nevertheless, they did not succeed in their attempt, because, besides that their testimony was false, it was not sufficient nor apposite enough for them to condemn Him to death.

[20] St. Matt. xxvi. 60.
[21] St. Mark xiv 58.
[22] St. John ii. 19.
[23] *Ibid.* 21.

CHAPTER XII.

The Priests condemn our Saviour and He is insulted and blasphemed.

Amidst all these calumnies and the noise of false witnesses, who came and went, said their say and gave their accusations, our Saviour kept silence with as much calmness and tranquillity as though they were not speaking of Him. For as His first reply had been so ill received, it was manifest that the judges were not disposed to listen to the truth, and that the court was only in appearance a tribunal, but in truth a seat of violence and a robbers' den. And as He saw He could not benefit those present by speaking, He resolved to benefit all the absent and all to come after Him by His silence and by the admirable example of His meekness and humility. But the High Priest, seeing that his schemes were being undone, that he was not gaining his aim, and that the witnesses were not bringing forward matter or grounds on which to condemn Him, sought to find them in the words of our Saviour Himself. He was impatient and furious at seeing that He remained silent with so much constancy and firmness, and not being able to hide the disturbance of his mind,[1] he hastily rose from the seat which he so unworthily filled, and with anger and rage he said to our Saviour, 'Why art Thou silent? Wherefore dost Thou not speak? What pride is this, or what feigning and dissimulation? Why dost Thou not answer for Thyself? Why dost Thou not reply even one word to so many accusations and testimonies as have been brought against Thee?' *Jesus autem tacebat et nihil respondit*[2]—'Jesus was silent and answered nothing.' Our Saviour still maintained silence, nor was it fitting that the Son

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 62. [2] *Ibid.* 63; St. Mark xiv. 61.

of God should change His determination to be silent through fear of the anger of a man. He taught us here that silence gives great perfection and beauty to patience, that it is a great thing, amidst injuries, contempt, and insults, to persevere and suffer in silence, and that when the accusation is most false and prejudicial, then so much the greater merit and justification is gained by humility and meekness. He taught us, moreover, that to speak on such occasions is a dangerous thing, although it be to speak good words, because amongst them are often mingled others such as ordinarily spring from our present annoyance and disturbance; and that so it is far better and safer to be silent and not to speak, as the prophet did when he says in the Psalm,[3] *Posui ori meo custodiam, cum consisteret peccator adversum me. Obmutui et humiliatus sum, et silui a bonis*—'I have set a guard to My mouth,' he says, 'when the sinner made war against Me. I was dumb in speech and humbled Myself in My heart, and kept silence from good words, and My sorrow was renewed within Me.[3]

Our Saviour at the same time manifested to us that great and never sufficiently praised meekness of His, which so long before had been foretold by the prophets, one of them saying,[4] *Sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur, et quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum*—'He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.' And the holy King David, as though he himself had been present on this occasion, speaks as it were in the person of the Saviour, saying,[5] *Amici mei et proximi mei adversum me appropinquaverunt et steterunt, et qui juxta me erant de longe steterunt, et vim faciebant qui quærebant animam meam. Et qui inquirebant mala mihi, locuti sunt vanitates, et dolos tota die meditabantur. Ego autem tanquam surdus non audiebam, et sicut mutus non aperiens os suum. Et factus sum sicut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore suo redargutiones*—'My friends,' he says, 'and My neighbours have drawn near and stood against Me, and they that were near Me stood afar of, and they that sought My soul used violence,

[3] Psalm xxxviii. 2. [4] Isaias liii. 7. [5] Psalm xxxvii. 12—15.

and they that sought evil to Me spoke vain things and studied deceit all the day long. But I, as a deaf man heard not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth, and I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth,' and this is literally what our Saviour did.

The Chief Priest, tired of so many delays, now resolved to inquire from Him clearly that which he desired to hear from His own mouth before the Council. For he knew better than the witnesses that the crime which it was necessary to prove was that of blasphemy, in order that he might sentence Him to the penalty of death. Therefore, as they had heard Him say that He was the Son of God, which they looked upon as a great blasphemy, he determined to set his snare and forge his calumny on this point, as was afterwards seen in the accusation which they made before Pilate, when they said,[6] *Secundum legem debet mori quia Filium Dei se fecit*—'According to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.' This then was the cause why the High Priest resolved to question Him directly upon this point, because He would then convict Him if He were to deny it of a lie, and if He confessed it, of wickedness. But that He might not defend Himself by silence, he used the strongest terms to oblige Him to answer, saying,[7] 'I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.'

Then our Saviour, because of the homage which He owed to His Father (in Whose name and by reverence to Whom He had been adjured), and also that He might not fall a point short of the truth which He had always preached, confessed it and did not deny it, although He knew that His confession would afford a pretext for condemning Him, and so He said,[8] 'Thou hast said it.' 'I am He Whom thou hast said.'[9] Then, that they might not be scandalized and prevented from believing the truth, because of the humility in which He then stood to be judged, He placed before their eyes the majesty with which He was soon to come in the clouds of heaven to judge the world,

[6] St. John xix. 7. [7] St. Matt. xxvi. 63. [8] *Ibid.* 64.
[9] St Mark xiv. 62.

for thus He said to them, 'I tell you of a truth, that very soon you will see the Man Who stands now humiliated before you, sitting at the right hand of the Eternal Father in an immoveable and everlasting kingdom, and coming in the clouds to be the Judge of all mankind.'

The High Priest, having heard this answer, with the same fury as he had shown on rising from his place, rent his garments with his own hands, an action and ceremony which they used when they heard any great blasphemy. Caiaphas, moreover, did this in order to render our Saviour's cause worse, and condemn what He had said as an intolerable blasphemy. And in truth God permitted that he should lay bare his breast, that all the world might perceive how full it was of envy and iniquity. And that aged and blasphemous priest could not hear the greatest and most excellent truth of all truths without deeming it a great blasphemy. Thus, as through the confession of this truth the Holy Catholic Church was founded upon St. Peter, so, through the denial of it as blasphemy the Synagogue was brought to an end by Caiaphas. And on this point it is much to be considered that, in the course of our Lord's Passion the High Priest himself, with his own hands, rent his vestments, while not even the executioners themselves, who crucified our Lord, dared to rend His tunic. For the Catholic Church, which is[10] the vestment of the Lord, although it is persecuted and afflicted, yet being founded upon this faith and the confession of the Son of God, will remain entire unto the end of the world, and all the power of hell shall not be able to prevail against her.[11] But the Synagogue, with its priesthood, ceremonies, and vestments, could not endure without being rent by the truth of the new and eternal Testament.

The Chief Priest having torn his vestments as a sign that the answer was abominable in his eyes, thus entirely perverting the order of justice and converting his office of judge into that of accuser and witness, turned to the rest of the priests and lawyers who were there present, and said to them—'What further need have we of witnesses?[12] What need have we of

[10] Isaias xlix. 18. [11] St. Matt. xvi. 18. [12] *Ibid.* xxvi. 65.

them, since by His own saying He is convicted of that which we want? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And what do you judge should be done in a case so clear and manifest? Then[13] they all, without one exception, condemned Him as guilty of death, and thus was fulfilled what our Lord Himself had said—'The Son of Man[14] shall be betrayed to the Chief Priests, and the Scribes and Pharisees, and they shall condemn Him to death.' The ministers and servants of the priests who were present, and who were awaiting the result and the sentence of the Council, now vented their rage upon Him as on a condemned criminal, with all kinds of blows and outrages; and we may understand, according to the text of the Evangelists, that even the priests themselves also took part in this. O ineffable patience of God! which in a certain manner was the cause of its own injury, for those ignorant and blind priests, persuaded that He must merit such treatment, since He suffered it, enraged also that such a Man should have revealed and reprehended their own vices, were impelled to vindicate their honour and revenge themselves on this occasion. Rising from the seats in which they had so unworthily filled the parts of judges, under cover of the night and the secrecy in which they had met, they let loose upon Him their rage and fury by blows and buffets, not having any respect to what became their own persons, or to what was due to the venerable Face of our Saviour!

With this the assembly dispersed, all being first agreed to meet the next morning in full council to conclude the cause and give orders for the execution of the sentence. The sacrilegious Chief Priest and unjust judge betook himself to repose in his chamber, leaving the innocent Lamb of God and the Saint of Saints to the care of his guards and servants, who dragged Him out of the hall with great noise and much rudeness. Then they took Him to some other little room, darker and dirtier, and worse furnished than the other, where they kept Him the remainder of that night as in prison, with gaolers and soldiers of the guard. And as they had Him there[15] they

[13] St. Mark xiv. 64. [14] St. Matt. xx. 18. [15] St. Luke xxii. 63.

determined to divert themselves with Him during the night, and to overcome sleep by jokes and grievous outrages against the Lord of Majesty. For if we examine with attention what the holy Evangelists say, we shall find, first,[16] that they mocked Him and scorned Him and made game of Him—*Illudebant ei*—this they did by calling Him names, hissing at Him, making jeers and grimaces at Him, and in a thousand other ways which the boys and lads and slaves and low people that are in the palaces of nobles use. Secondly, they spat upon Him[17]—*Tunc exspuerunt in faciem ejus, et cœperunt quidam conspuere eum*—vile and daring men with their filthy and nauseous spittle disfigured that sweetest countenance, on which, as St. Peter says,[18] the angels desire to look. Thirdly, they struck Him[19]—*Cædentes*—with blows and kicks; striking Him with their clenched fists. Fourthly, they covered His Face, to be able with greater liberty and less shame to execute their ill will—the wretched Jews thus condemning themselves never more to see light for ever. Having covered those Eyes[20] from which nothing is hid, some of them spat on Him, and others buffeted Him with open hands, thus causing Him much affront and no less pain. And because He had gone amongst the people with the fame and common reputation of a prophet, so for greater sport and scorn they struck Him and at the same time said,[21] 'Prophesy to us now, O Christ, who was it who struck Thee?' And many other things[22] like these, to His dishonour and injury, they said against Him, blaspheming Him. And in this was manifested, on the one hand, the boldness, and on the other, the blindness and delusion of men who seek to give a blow to God, and to hide their hands in doing so, who think to blind the eyes of the Most High by their hypocrisy, and to prevent Him from seeing or understanding their evil deeds.

As to all these scoffings and blows we ought not to leave out what so many years before had been foretold by the Prophet Isaias, who beholding in spirit this scene saw not only that they

[16] St. Luke xxii. 63. [17] St. Matt. xxvi. 67; St. Mark xiv. 65.
[18] Epist. i. 12. [19] St. Luke xxii. 63.
[20] Heb. iv. 13. [21] St. Matt. xxvi. 68. [22] St. Luke xxii. 65.

struck Him and spat upon Him and insulted Him by words, but also that they pulled the hair of His head, and plucked His beard, and that He suffered all willingly and with the greatest constancy and firmness, and therefore he says[23] in the name of our Lord, *Corpus meum dedi percutientibus, et genas meas vellentibus; faciem meum non averti ab increpantibus et conspuentibus in me*—'I have given My body to the strikers, and My cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned My face away from them that rebuked Me and spat upon Me.' From this we may much consider not only the great gentleness and humility of our Saviour, but also the magnanimity and constancy with which He held up His head firmly, without turning it away, or hiding it from them who spat upon Him and struck Him and buffeted Him.

The guards who had the charge of our Saviour were changed at intervals throughout the night, some sleeping and others watching; those who took the place of their fellows always bringing some new mischief and new invention of insult by which they all made themselves merry at the cost of our suffering Saviour, and the room in which He was resounding with laughter. In this way, and with this entertainment, all that night was passed, a night which had no morning dawn for the blind children of the blind Synagogue.

[23] Isaias l. 6.

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Peter denies our Saviour.

The anguish of this night was increased by the denials of St. Peter, who being one of the most favoured and privileged of the Apostles, and having been, moreover, so often warned by our Saviour and put on his guard against the temptation which was to come upon him, yet there in His presence, and, as it were, before His very eyes, denied Him for very slight causes, not once, but three times, using many oaths and maledictions to confirm his declaration that he knew Him not. It appears that the first denial took place at midnight, for although St. John[1] places it immediately after Peter entered the door, through the favour procured him by the other disciple from the keeper of the door, yet he puts it there because it was the portress who had opened the door to him that asked him the question. But she did not ask him when he first entered, but only after he was within the hall, as St. Mark says,[2] where the attendants and servants had lighted a fire[3] to protect themselves against the cold; and when the portress addressed him the question, as the Evangelists note,[4] Peter was warming himself at the fire in the midst of them. Thus it appears that the maidservant did not question him when he first entered, but after, when he was already within, and that the first denial took place after midnight, when the cold is most severe. Again, St. Mark says,[5] that immediately after his denial he went out of the hall, and the cock crew the first time, and this first crow generally takes place after twelve o'clock, or about

[1] xviii. 17. [2] xiv. 66. [3] St. John xviii. 18.
[4] St. Mark xiv. 67; St. Luke xxii. 55. [5] xiv. 68.

one o'clock in the morning. The third denial must have taken place about four o'clock, more or less, for all the Evangelists say[6] that immediately on his denying our Lord the third time, the cock crew. And St. Mark especially observes that it was the second time that it crew, because immediately after the first denial it had crowed the first time, and the second cockcrowing is generally a little before dawn, which would be about four o'clock in the morning. The second denial was made about an hour before the third, as St. Luke clearly says,[7] and according to this it would be near three o'clock, or thereabouts. From which it is manifest that when our Saviour said to St. Peter that before the cock crew twice[8] he would have denied Him thrice, He did not count the number of crows that the cock makes when it crows, for it crows several times together, and almost continuously, but only the two times at which the cock is accustomed to crow; one after midnight, and the other immediately before morning dawns. And in following the thread of the history we see that after the first time when the cock crew passed the whole time between the first and second denial, and that at least an hour passed between the second and third. All, therefore, passed very quickly, and in a short space, and as the saying is, between night and morning. And to show that it was so, St. Luke calls the time which elapsed between the first and second denial[9] *pusillum*—'a little time,' and the same term is used by St. Mark[10] to signify the space which intervened between the second and the third denial. This is what we may understand as to the time of the three denials.

As to the place in which the denials were made, it appears to be most probable that they were all made in the hall or court of the house of the Chief Priest, where the soldiers of the guard were generally stationed, with the other servants of the priests who belonged to the Council. In this court, on account of its being open to the sky, the custom in the palaces and large houses was to light a fire that all might warm

[6] St. Matt. xxvi. 74; St. Mark xiv. 72; St. Luke xxii. 60; St. John xviii. 27
[7] xxii. 59. [8] St. Mark xiv. 30. [9] xxii. 58. [10] xiv. 70.

themselves. We must also know that when Peter entered into the palace of the Chief Priest at the intercession of the other disciple, he did not go up nor into the inner and private hall, where the audience was being held, but remained with the other persons in the court, and thus it may with truth be said, that Peter was within and yet outside. He was inside the palace, because he had entered the house of the Chief Priest, and this is what St. John says,[11] that that disciple who was known to the High Priest entered with Jesus into the court of the house, and speaking to the portress, introduced Peter. It may also be said that he remained without, because he was outside the hall where the audience was being held, and where the priests were assembled in council. And this is what St. Matthew says,[12] that Peter sat without in the court. That the audience chamber to which our Saviour was taken was in the upper part of the house is sufficiently shown by what St. Mark[13] says, that Peter was in the court below. And if it be asked how it could be possible that our Saviour being inside some hall or chamber above, and Peter in the court below, our Saviour could yet look at him, as St. Luke says he did,[14] after he had denied Him the third time, St. Augustine answers this by saying that He looked at him spiritually, with the eyes of His Divinity, helping him and favouring him with succours of His grace that he might come to himself again and repent. But although it be true that our Saviour looked at Peter in this manner, it is not to be denied that He also looked at Him with the eyes of His Body, which He was able to do in the way which we shall see by following the course of the history, which passed as we shall now say.

Midnight having passed, when the enemies of our Lord, either conquered by sleep, or suffering from cold, or satiated and tired with mocking our Saviour, were relieving and changing places with one another; then, in the time which remained before morning, the Apostle denied Him three times, in order that there might not be wanting to Him even then matter for pain and grief. For our Saviour was kept in another

[11] xviii. 16. [12] xxvi. 69. [13] xiv. 66. [14] xxii. 61.

and more secret chamber, that He might be the better guarded, and meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the court,[15] to which he had gained an entrance through favour of the other disciple who was known to the High Priest. During the time of his waiting there, the officers who were in the court, and the servants of the house, had lighted a fire,[16] and had made a blaze in the midst of the court,[17] because it was cold, and had gathered round it, some seated,[18] others standing,[19] as people do to warm themselves. Peter, as one in whom the fire of the love of Christ had become cold, was standing with them to warm himself by the fire of the enemies of Christ. For he in whom interior consolation and the relish and love of interior things fails, soon begins to long for exterior consolations and sensual entertainments and delights.

Then, one of the maidservants of the High Priest (and it was[20] the portress who had permitted Peter to enter) saw him[21] sitting in the firelight with the others, and she said to him, 'Wert thou not perchance one of the disciples of this Man?' Then, observing him closer,[22] and looking at him with greater attention and care, she herself affirmed it, saying,[23] 'Yes, verily, thou art one of those who used to be with Jesus the Nazarene,' and to those who were standing round she said,[24] 'This man also was one of those who used to go with Him.'

Peter, finding himself accused by the servant girl before so many persons, who on hearing the woman speak thus had turned round to look at and scrutinize him, was disheartened and full of fear, and denied before them all, and said—'I am not,' 'I do not know Him,' 'Woman, I neither know Him, nor understand what thou sayest.'[25]

O Peter, Peter! How short a time ago is it since thou saidst—'Although all should be scandalized, yet will not I be scandalized, and even though I should die for it with Thee, I

[15] St. Matt. xxvi. 69. [16] St. John xviii. 18. [17] St. Luke xxii. 55. [18] *Ibid.* [19] St. John xviii. 18. [20] *Ibid.* 17. [21] St. Luke xxii. 56. [22] *Ibid.* [23] St. Matt. xxvi. 69; St. Mark xiv. 67. [24] St. Luke xxii. 56. [25] St. Matt. xxvi. 70; St. John xviii. 17; St. Luke xxii. 57; St. Mark xiv. 68.

will not deny Thee!' Now thou art in no peril of death, the Roman Governor does not examine thee, the High Priest of the Jews asks thee no questions, the soldiers do not menace thee, how is it that thy courage has failed thee at a question put to thee by a slave girl, and that thou dost not know how to reply to the words of a poor portress? Oh, how vainly, and with how little foundation, does the weak man presume upon himself! how little occasion is enough to overcome him if he be not aided by divine grace!

Those who were present having risen to their feet, Peter also rose[26] with them, after having uttered his denial, and, to hide his emotion, remained warming himself at the fire; but his evil conscience would not allow him to rest long, for he very soon slipped away from them secretly,[27] and went out of the court to the entrance or portal of the palace, and while he was standing there the cock crew the first time, which would be soon after midnight.

The confusion and tumult reigning there would be great, on account of the number of people going in and out, the various conversations held and the opinions which were given, as is the case on similar occasions, in the houses of great people and among the officers and servants. Peter mingled amongst these people, partly desiring to keep himself concealed and fearing lest he should be recognized, and partly through anxiety to see what would be done with his Master. His conscience had remained ill at ease ever since his first denial, and so he could not rest in any place or anyhow, and so he would at one time seat himself, at another he would rise to his feet, now he would join in the conversation and talk of the servants, and now he would withdraw and flee from them, now he would go out of the court and now return thither, all in a great state of disturbance and terror.

Matters were in this state when once,[28] not long after the first denial, that is, the same night about three in the morning, as he was going out of the gate,[29] another of the maidservants

[26] St. John xviii. 25.
[27] St. Mark xiv. 68.
[28] St. Luke xxii. 58.
[29] St. Matt. xxvi. 71.

of the house observed him and said to those who were there present, 'This man also is one of those who were with Jesus of Nazareth.'[30] On account of what this woman said he returned into the court, and as he stood at the fire warming himself,[31] those who were gathered round it inquired of him, saying, 'Art not thou also one of the disciples of this Man?' And he denied, saying 'I am not.' But one of them in particular,[32] who looked at him more attentively, or perhaps knew him better, affirmed the contrary, saying, 'Without doubt thou art also one of them.' But he answered, 'Leave me alone, O man! for I am not,' and he made oath, moreover,[33] 'that he knew not the Man.'

Peter having experienced how great was his weakness by his first denial, ought to have fled at once from the place and from the conversation that had been the cause of so much injury to him; but as, on the contrary, he persevered in remaining on the spot, the occasion grew more dangerous and his fault also increased. On the first occasion it had been one woman or slave only who had asked him, and he had simply denied the truth, whereas on this second occasion, although it was another maidservant who began the subject, yet the bystanders insisted on the same charge, and he judged that it was requisite to give them greater satisfaction; so, filled with fear as he was, he confirmed his denial with an oath, rendering thereby his fault the more heinous. In this he teaches us that weak men ought diligently to shun the occasions of sin, if they do not desire to fall more seriously and heinously, as it happened to Peter, who, remaining by the fire in conversation with those around, denied his Master the third time, more shamefully than he had done on the first and second occasion.

For a short time afterwards,[34] it might have been an hour,[35] one of those present insisted and said, 'Of a truth[36] this man was also with Him, for it is easy to see that he is a Galilean.' Then those who stood around, taking up his words, repeated

[30] St. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* lib. iii. cap. 6. [31] St. John xviii. 25.
[32] St. Luke xxii. 58. [33] St. Matt. xxvi. 72. [34] *Ibid.* 73.
[35] St. Luke xxii. 59. [36] *Ibid.*

them to Peter, saying,[37] 'Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean and thou canst not deny it,[38] for even thy speech doth discover thee.' This they said because, although the Galileans spoke the Hebrew tongue, they did so with a well known pronunciation of their own. Whilst Peter was denying that he was one of those who used to go about with our Saviour, there was there one of the servants of the High Priest, a kinsman of him whose ear Peter had cut off, and he pressed him hard, saying,[39] 'Thou canst not deny it, for I saw thee in the garden in His company.' Then Peter denied again, saying,[40] 'Man, I understand not what thou sayest,' and like a man altogether put out and desperate,[41] he began to make oaths and imprecations to confirm his statement that he neither knew nor had spoken with such a Man. And immediately, before he had finished speaking, whilst the words were still in his mouth, the cock crew the second time, which would be before the dawn: that is to say, at four o'clock in the morning. Peter having thus denied three times before the cock crew, the prophecy of the Heavenly Physician was fulfilled, and the sick man was convicted of his vain presumption, because that had not been accomplished which he had imagined and promised he should do, when he said, 'I will go to death with Thee,' but on the contrary, that which our Saviour had prophesied, 'Three times thou shalt deny Me.' And not without a cause is it that all the four Evangelists are unanimous and uniform in setting down the three denials of St. Peter, for the single purpose of teaching us and warning us what a great evil it is vainly to confide in and presume upon ourselves.

Our Saviour remembered Peter, who was so forgetful of himself and of his good Master, and He turned His eyes mercifully upon him, that He might shed light upon the darkness in which he was. And He gave His hand to him who had fallen, that He might set him once more on his feet.[42] Our Lord turned and looked on Peter, because although He had been put in bonds as a prisoner in another and different chamber, it may

[37] St. Mark xiv. 70. [38] St. Matt. xxvi. 73. [39] St. John xviii. 26.
[40] St. Luke xxii. 60. [41] St. Matt. xxvi. 75. [42] St. Luke xxii. 61.

well be probable that after the Council had been dissolved, our Saviour was brought down to some lower chamber, one of those which opened on the court, where the lowest and humblest of the servants of the house were accustomed to dwell. Or, if it were not thus, it may be that after Peter had uttered his third denial, he, hearing the sound of the voices and the rude tumult amongst the guards who were mocking our Saviour, went up to see what was passing. And thus he placed himself in such a position that our Saviour could see him, either through the door or in some other way, and although He was Himself in so much affliction, He succoured His disciple in the manner which He could, which was by His Eyes. Our Saviour then looked at St. Peter (as St. Leo says),[43] and exposed as He was to the calumnies of the priests, to the lies and falsehoods of the witnesses, and to the insults of those who spat upon Him and struck Him, He nevertheless set Himself to reason and expostulate with the disciple who was in trouble, by means of those same Eyes with which He had beheld so long before that so it would be with him.

Our Lord looked upon Peter, and that look was so loving and efficacious, that the disciple understood immediately all that His Master wished to say thereby, and entered into himself and remembered the words our Lord had said and which he had not then believed,[44] 'Before the cock crow twice thou shalt have denied Me thrice.'

Et egressus foras flevit amare.[45] He wept bitterly for the clear knowledge which God gave him of the heinousness of his sin and of the majesty and goodness of the Lord Whom he had offended. He wept bitterly also, because his tears sprang from the sweetness of the love of his Master Whom he had denied. He considered how our Lord was the Son of the living God, and how he had confessed Him and known Him as such through divine revelation, and he wept that he had denied Him through fear of men, Him Whom he knew and believed to be the very God. He recollected the words of eternal life which he had heard from Him, and the meekness

[43] *Serm.* iii. *de Pas.* [44] St. Mark xiv. 72. [45] St. Matt. xxvi. 75.

and gentleness that he had experienced from Him, and for this also he wept bitterly. He counted over the singular benefits that he had received from Him, the honour and favour which had been bestowed upon him above his fellows, and the gentleness and love with which his Master had foretold and warned him of his weakness. When too, in addition to all this, he remembered how many times, and for what slight causes, and with how much obstinacy he had disowned Him, and with what oaths and maledictions he had denied Him, the fire burnt within his heart and tortured him with the flames of grief and love, causing fresh torrents of tears to flow from his eyes. And his grief and compunction were so great, that all his life long, when the cock crew in the morning, his heart was convulsed with pain, and he wept anew over his crime as though he had never wept over it before. And it seems as if St. Mark observed on this when he says, that going out of the house of the High Priest he 'began then to weep[46]—*et cæpit flere*—that is, he then began to weep, to continue the same during the rest of his life.

Moreover, although this holy penitent was so pierced and became so full of compunction at this look of our Lord, yet he did not attempt, as he might have done, to make a public retractation, but preferred to go out from thence to weep in secret. For his fall had left him more humble and less confident in himself, and he did not wish to expose himself to further risk or make further proof of his weakness. Hereby he taught the weak to fly from occasions, and not to be filled with a desire to show themselves in public until they are fortified and clothed with strength from on high. As little did he attempt to throw himself at the feet of our Saviour and entreat of Him pardon and mercy, for he was full of shame and humility, and desired that his prayers and tears should supplicate for him, and obtain in his behalf that which for him to entreat so quickly after his crime appeared too great daring. With good reason he prayed and was silent, seeing that a fault truly wept for is not made excuse for, and one who does not seek to excuse himself

[46] St. Mark xiv. 72.

in words, cleanses himself and makes himself stainless by weeping. And that he might weep the better he went out, because although the confusion and tumult of the palace were suitable for denial, they were not so for tears, and the true penitent shows himself such by withdrawing from the occasions of sin. And to whom should he go for consolation but to the Blessed Virgin, the only refuge of sinners, to tell her all about his sorrow and his bitter grief? And then, animated by her most sweet words, he shut himself up in a cave to weep, with firm hope of obtaining pardon.

Not without good reason did our Saviour permit such weakness in him whom He had marked out to be the foundation stone of the Church. And amongst other causes we may consider four. The first, that no one might confide presumptuously in himself, since even an Apostle who was so beloved and privileged fell, and so every one should lay to heart the advice of St. Paul—'He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.'[47] The second, that no one should distrust God, though he finds he has fallen, since Peter, having committed so great a fault, through tears and penitence regained his former grace and the friendship of his Lord, and was made Prince of the Apostles, the Head of the Church, the Shepherd of the fold of Christ, and the depositary of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The third, that the Apostle might remain ever humble and more circumspect, as St. Augustine says[48] in these words, *Audeo dicere superbis esse utile cadere in aliquot apertum manifestumque peccatum, unde sibi displiceant, qui jam sibi placendo ceciderant; salubrius enim Petrus sibi displicuit quando flevit, quam sibi placuit quando præsumpsit*—'I am bold to declare,' says the Saint, 'that it is profitable for the proud to fall into some open and manifest sin, that so they may be displeased with themselves who by taking pleasure in themselves have come to fall, for it was more profitable for Peter to be displeased with himself when weeping over his fault, than it was profitable to him to have been pleased with himself when presuming on his own constancy.' The fourth reason

[47] 1 Cor. x. 12. [48] *Civit. Dei.* c. xiii.

is given by St. Gregory,[49] *Ut is qui futurus erat Pastor Ecclesiæ in sua culpa disceret qualiter aliis misereri debuisset*—'That he,' says the Saint, 'who was destined to be the Shepherd of the Church, might learn by his own fault how to compassionate those who fall.' For the mercy which our Saviour showed to St. Peter was in every way great and worthy of eternal memory. The servant denies his Lord, Who dies innocent for his sake, and in the midst of the death which the Lord is suffering, and of the fault which His servant is committing, He looks on him to save him, and gives him His hand that he may not be utterly lost. Such, and of so great compassion was it fit that the Lord of Life should be, and so full of pity was it meet that the shepherd should be who had in His place to feed His flock, that he might remember the mercy that had been shown him by his Master, and so never forsake any one of his sheep, however weak, rebellious, or far-straying it may have been.

[49] *Hom.* xxi. *in Evan.*

CHAPTER XIV.

On the Love with which Christ our Lord suffered for men.[1]

Our Saviour passed all that night in the power of those who were insulting Him and afflicting Him, thinking thoughts of peace and not of affliction or vengeance, for nothing could have put force upon Him, and it was of His own will that He delivered Himself up for the love of God and men. Although, on the one hand, He permitted His most holy Humanity to feel sorrow, yet on the other hand His love was so great and burning, that it wrought in Him a most ardent thirst for injuries and a great hunger for afflictions. So, then, during this night He had His Heart filled with joy and consolation, baptizing Himself, as He said,[2] with this baptism, and, as the prophet wrote,[3] satiating Himself with outrages. This love of Christ, as the Apostle says,[4] surpasseth all knowledge and conception, because the fountain whence it proceeds is above all knowledge and understanding. For it is not founded nor upheld on the perfection, the beauty, or merits of man, since he is a creature so low and so imperfect in his body, and as to his soul a vessel so full of iniquity, that it would not be possible to love him for his own sake, especially as this Divine Lover is neither blind, nor led by passion, nor capricious, so as to be able to love a creature so mean and so little deserving. This love of Christ our Lord for men was founded on the love which His Eternal Father felt for Him, and on the excellent benefits by which He had bound Him to Himself. For the gifts which our Lord, as Man, had received from His Father, being so many and illustrious, and the gratitude and love He felt for them being so great, out of

[1] Taken from M. Avila's *Treatise on the Love of God.*

[2] St. Luke xii. 50. [3] Lament. iii. 30. [4] Ephes. iii. 19.

respect and reverence for His Father, He loved man above all knowledge and above all estimation.

In order to understand this truth to its very root, and so the more to glorify our Lord, while His enemies are mocking Him, we ought to consider the inestimable greatness of the graces which were granted by the most Holy Trinity to the Humanity of Christ our Lord in the instant of His conception. For, in the first place, when the Divine Person was united thereto, there was given to that Humanity the Divine Essence, so that we may with truth say that Man is really God, and the Son of God, and to be adored in heaven and on earth as God. It is clear that this grace was infinite, on account of the gift which was bestowed by it, which was no less than the Essence of God, and also because of the manner in which it was given, which was by the most entire and intimate union which can be imagined, that is to say, by means of personal union.

It was also given to that new Man to be the universal Father and Head of all men, so that virtue should flow down unto them all from Him as their spiritual Head, so that as God He is equal to the Eternal Father, and as Man He is the Prince and the Head of all men. In conformity, therefore, to this there was given to Him infinite grace, that from Him, as from a fountain of grace and a sea of sanctity, all men might receive grace, and this not only because in Him there was greater grace than in all men, but also because He was to be the Sanctifier of all, and so to say, a glowing furnace of sanctity whence all those who are to be saints must receive their bright enamel of holiness. There was, moreover, given to Him another particular grace, for the perfection and sanctification of His own life, which grace may likewise be termed infinite, because nothing can ever be added to it. Beyond all this there were bestowed upon Him at that time all the graces—*gratis datæ*—of working miracles and wonders as many as He wished; and all these were given to Him in the highest degree and in supreme perfection. Added to all this, there was given to Him at the same moment to see clearly the Divine Essence and to know perfectly the majesty

and glory of the Word, with Whom He was one; and that thus beholding God He should be in the possesion of beatitude and filled with as much glory as He possesses now that He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Now when this holy Soul, in that blessed moment that It was created, opened Its eyes and beheld Itself so enriched as we have said; when He knew from Whose hands He had received so many benefits, and found Himself raised to the first place among all created beings; and when He saw kneeling before Him all the hierarchies of heaven, who, as St. Paul says,[5] adored Him, is it possible, think you, to describe the love with which that Soul would love Him Who had so highly glorified Him, and with what desires He would long that something might be offered to Him by which He might show gratitude to and serve such a Benefactor? There are no tongues of Cherubim and Seraphim that could declare this.

Then, if in answer to these great desires of this holy Soul, it had been declared and revealed that the will of God was to save the human race, which had been lost through the fault of a man, that He was to be charged with this undertaking for His honour and obedience, and that He must embrace with all His Heart this glorious enterprize, and not weary of it till He had brought it to a conclusion: moreover, that He must love all men as a thing commended to Him by His Father, with so much love and desire that, in order that they might be healed and restored to glory, He should willingly do and suffer all that was necessary to this end; tell me now, as soon as that holy Soul, so desirous to please the Eternal Father, knew all this, with what kind of love would He not turn to men to love and embrace them, through obedience to His Father? There is no language or power in creation which can declare all this, because on the part of God there was the highest possible communication of His benefits, and on the part of Christ our Lord there was the most perfect correspondence, thankfulness, and love.

From this fountain flowed that great and abundant stream of love which our Saviour shed forth on all mankind, because

[5] Heb. i. 6.

He regarded them as a gift bestowed on Him by His Eternal Father. The Gospel is full of this, for in one place it says,[6] *Omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo*—that is, all men and all things which belong to them have been given and recommended to Me by My Father. And for what end were they given, if not for that of which our Saviour Himself speaks? *Hæc est autem voluntas ejus,*[7] *qui misit me, Patris, ut omne, quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo.* As if He had said, *Ut ex eo omni nihil perdam.* 'This is,' He says, 'the will of My Father Who has sent Me, that of all those which He has commended to Me, not one should be lost,' but as when He gave and commended them to Him they were already lost, the commending them that they should not be lost was as though He had commended them that they should be saved. Again, *Non enim misit Deus Filium suum in mundum, ut judicet mundum, sed ut salvetur mundus per ipsum*[8]—'For God did not send His Son into the world to judge and condemn it for its sins, but that the world might be saved through Him.' Therefore it is, that at His first coming He sent Him not as Judge but as Saviour.

It was this same recommendation by His Eternal Father which made Him so solicitous in the work of our redemption, as St. John observes, when He says,[9] *Sciens quia omnia dedit ei Pater in manus.* For He knew that His Father had committed all men to Him, and had placed in His hands all that belonged to their redemption, and for this it was that He rose from supper, and put off His garments, and girded Himself with a towel, and did not disdain to perform a work of so much humility as that of washing the feet of His disciples. For this same cause He says it was that He had preached to them,[10] *Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus quos dedisti mihi*—'I have preached Thy Name to those whom Thou gavedst and recommendest to Me.' For the self same cause also He prayed for them,[11] *Non pro mundo rogo, sed pro his, quos dedisti mihi, quia tui sunt*—'I do not pray,' says our Lord, 'for the world, but for those disciples whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine and Thou hast

[6] St. Matt. xi. 27. [7] St. John vi. 39. [8] *Ibid.* iii. 17
[9] *Ibid.* xiii. 3. [10] *Ibid.* [11] *Ibid.* xvii. 19.

committed them to Me.' Finally, for the same cause He offered Himself up for them,[12] *Et pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum*—as though He had said, 'For them I offer Myself in sacrifice.' And when they were about to take Him that He might be sacrificed, for this cause it was that He came forward in defence of His own,[13] *Si ergo me quæritis sinite hos abire. Ut impleretur sermo quem dixit: quia quos dedisti mihi, non perdidi ex eis quemquam.* He took this care, says the Evangelist, that that might be fulfilled of which He had spoken when praying to His Father—'Of those which Thou hast given Me, Father, not one of them has been lost through My fault.' And this was one especial reason why He was so grieved at the perdition of Judas, in order that, Judas being a thing recommended to Him by His Father, it might not appear that He had shown less care in preserving and watching over him, since, although He had employed so many means to gain him, He nevertheless took pains to give a satisfactory explanation how he had been after all actually lost, because so it behoved Him to leave him in his hardness of heart, that the Scripture might be fulfilled:[14] *Quos dedisti mihi custodivi, et nemo ex eis periit nisi filius perditionis, ut Scriptura impleatur*—'Those whom Thou gavest Me, Father, I have kept with care, and not one of them is lost, but the son of perdition, as it was written that so it should be, and thus, it turning out as it did, the Scripture is fulfilled.'

From this same fountain sprang, not only the love which He felt for men, but that also which He felt for the pain and outrages and the other sufferings which it was proper that He should undergo for the welfare and redemption of men. And this it is that He said when He entered upon His Passion,[15] 'That the world may know that I love the Father, and according as the Father has given Me commandment, so I accomplish it and do. Arise, let us go hence.' Whither? to die for man upon a cross. So great was the eagerness which He felt to offer His Father this service, that He exclaimed,[16] 'I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until

[12] St. John xvii. 19. [13] *Ibid.* xviii. 8. [14] *Ibid.* xvii. 12.
[15] *Ibid.* xiv. 34. [16] St. Luke xii. 50.

it be accomplished!' For so great was the desire He had to see Himself bathed in His own blood, that each hour which delayed it seemed to Him a thousand years, through the greatness of His love. Hence, too, came that glorious festal procession of palms with which He chose to be received when He entered into Jerusalem to suffer, that so He might teach the world the gladness of His Heart; and for this same reason He desired to mount the bridal bed of the Cross amidst the acclamations of the people and encircled with roses and flowers.

This is that power which is signified by the prophet, when he says[17]—'He hath rejoiced as a giant to run His way. His going out is from the end of heaven, and His circuit even unto the height thereof, and there is no one that can hide himself from His heat.' O love divine, which camest forth from God and returnest to God! Because Thou didst not love man for man, but for God! Who is there that can hide himself from Thy heat, and defend himself against Thy love? For Thy charity is so burning, and so mightily kindled, that it does violence to our hearts, as Thy Apostle felt when he said[18]—*Caritas Christi urget nos.*

Hence also may be drawn a new argument, whereby to know something of the most excellent charity of Christ and the ardent desire He had to suffer. For this charity so constrained the Apostle St. Paul, and love put so much force upon him, that he despised hunger and thirst, persecutions and the sword, life and death itself, in order to satisfy his love, and even desired to suffer the sensible pains of hell themselves,[19] *Optabam enim ego ipse anathema esse a Christo pro fratribus meis*—that is, he desired, for the sake of his brethren, to be separated from Christ, as regarded the participation of glory, although not as regarded love and grace. And what shall we say of the Apostle St. Andrew, who seeing the cross on which he was to die, saluted it joyously with loving courtship, as a well beloved spouse, and asked it to rejoice with him as he rejoiced with it? Take to thyself, then, wings, O my soul, and ascend this ladder until thou reach the tender Heart of Christ, and reflect

that if the Apostle St. Andrew rejoiced over the cross for the sake of the love he felt for his Master Who had died upon it, and if the Apostle Paul felt such great love for men that he verily and indeed desired to suffer the pains of hell for their sakes, how much greater must have been the longing of Christ, since so far greater was His grace and His charity?

The Patriarch Jacob served his father-in-law, Laban, for seven years that he might wed the beautiful Rachel, and it cost him so much toil,[20] that he slept not at night nor rested by day, was scorched with heat and with frost; and yet with all this the seven years appeared but a few days,[21] because of the greatness of the love which he bare her. What then must have seemed to our Saviour one night of abuse and three hours of the Cross, and, in short, one day of Passion, as the price at which He might espouse His Church and make her so beautiful[22] that there should not be found in her either spot or wrinkle? Without doubt He loved much more than He suffered, and there remained far greater love shut up in His Heart than that which He showed outwardly in His wounds. And if as they ordered that He should suffer one death, so they had ordered Him to suffer a thousand deaths, He had love enough for all; and if what they ordered Him to suffer for the salvation of all men, that same they had ordered Him to suffer for each one of them, He would have done it for one as for all; and if, as He remained three hours hanging on the Cross, so it had been necessary for Him to remain there until the end of the world, He had love enough for all had it been necessary for us.

It being so, then, that all that our Lord suffered was much less than what He loved and desired to suffer—if this little spark of love which He has shown us outwardly in this manner has been so astonishing to men as to be[23] a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, what would it have been if He had made another manifestation which would have revealed more fully all the greatness of His love? And if His love was such that it has made wicked men lose their senses, and become

[20] Gen. xxxi. 40. [21] *Ibid.* xxix. 20. [22] Ephes. v. 27. [23] 1 Cor. i. 32.

blind in the midst of light, what ought His children and His friends to feel and to do, who have so fully believed and know so much of His love? This it is which has made them as it were beside themselves, and put them into a state of astonishment and stupor, when they have retired into their own hearts, and God has discovered to them these secrets and has given them to understand these mysteries. Hence it has been that they have melted away in tears, and been set on fire with love; hence their desire for martyrdom, their rejoicing in tribulations, their delight in injuries, their welcoming and embracing all that the world abhors and fears, their loving and desiring all that Christ our Lord has desired and loved.

Here also is revealed another reason which our Saviour had for so joyfully making Himself, on this night of His Passion, the mark for all the mockings, blows, and jeers of that vile and ill-conditioned crowd. For with ineffable joy of heart He saw, in all which took place in His Person, the image of a world renewed and of spiritual men, who in considering what He suffered would have their hearts inflamed with charity, and burning in this furnace of love would be transformed into His image and likeness, abhorring honour because the world did not offer it to Him, and loving and seeking dishonour because that was His portion. For this cause He permitted Himself with so much meekness to be dishonoured, and allowed Himself with so much constancy and fortitude to be struck, not seeking to protect His body from blows, or to turn away His face from spitting, because He saw and knew that by the hand of these ministers of ill the Eternal Father was fashioning in Him the exemplar and the pattern of all the predestinated.

Finally, we ought to consider how great was the pleasure which the Eternal Father took in all that His Son suffered, how He felt Himself honoured by His obedience, humility, and meekness, and how He was preparing and devising the honour with which He would honour Him in recompence for this dishonour, and all the holy services of praise which would be sung perpetually in heaven and earth for the insults and revilings which were then uttered against Him.

CHAPTER XV.

Our Saviour is condemned by the whole Council.

THE next day now dawned—the Friday, a day most unfortunate for that blind and reprobate people, which was therein to commit a crime so horrible, and to merit so severe a punishment; a day, on the other hand, most blessed throughout all ages, since in it an end was to be put to sin, the world was to be redeemed, and the gate of heaven, which till then had been closed, was to be thrown open. Although, on the night before, the Council had met in the house of Caiaphas, and a great number of false witnesses had been sought for and examined, still, that a better colour might be given to their proceedings, and that the people might be persuaded to their wickedness, it was determined that as soon as morning came another full Council should be assembled[1] in the accustomed place, and that the cause of our Saviour should be therein examined with more of judicial forms, and with less appearance of disturbance and passion; all with the intention of condemning Him to death and handing Him over to the secular arm of the Romans. And though it is true that the members of the Council were most of them old men, or at least advanced in years, and that they had been up very late the night before, both for the apprehending of our Lord and for the Council which had been held in the house of the High Priest, still[2] the morning had hardly come before they had all again assembled in council, so solicitous and diligent were they in the execution of their iniquity.

This Council, in the opinion of many, was not held in the house of the High Priest (where our Saviour had been kept

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 1. [2] St. Mark xv. 1.

during the night), but in a certain place which was set apart for that purpose, such as the Courts of Law of the present day. The judges having met in this court, and being seated in due order, the prisoner was cited to appear before the Council. They dragged Him from the prison in which He had been thrown, and hurried Him through the street surrounded by a large body of guards, and with great shouting and cries, as well as with the utmost scorn and ignominy. It was already clear day, and the people crowded into the streets and to the windows to see so new and extraordinary a trial of a Person so well known and so much esteemed for the opinion entertained of His sanctity. Our Saviour came forth with His hands fast bound, and a rope round His neck, a penalty which was inflicted on persons who abused their natural liberty to the detriment of the common weal. He came forth frozen with cold, His face disfigured with blows and spitting, His beard and hair torn by plucking, His cheek marked by weals, and all disfigured by the clotted and congealed blood which the strokes He had received had caused to flow. In this manner our Saviour proceeded in public through the streets, to the astonishment and consternation of all, who in the terrible treatment to which He had been subject could not avoid seeing a manifest intention to condemn Him.

The report of what was taking place in the city doubtless reached the ears of the Blessed Virgin. She was told how her Son had been taken out of prison, and how they were leading Him through the streets to answer for Himself before the Council; and the heart of that most loving Mother was pierced with the thought of the pain and travail of so dear a Son, and she determined to come forth out of her retreat, and to seek some relief in seeing what yet she could not behold without the deepest grief. With her also came Mary Magdalene and the other holy women, accompanied by the Apostle St. John; while the rest of the Apostles went singly through the streets, taking care to conceal themselves among the people, to see in what this business would end. But the Blessed Virgin, our Lady, with her heart closely clinging to that of her Son, went

on her way to see Him, with so much modesty and prudence as to give the furious crowd no opportunity of addressing any insults to her, or of showing her any disrespect. And it is a wonderful thing, and worthy of deep consideration, that though the Blessed Virgin, our Lady, was present during the course of the Passion, and stood so near the foot of the Cross, and though the multitude was so enraged and furious, yet our Saviour had so much care for the honour and respect which were due to His Mother, that He did not permit any one to misbehave himself to her, even by a single little word of insolence. All her cross and all her martyrdom were to be in her heart, within which she offered to the Eternal Father, with the most profound humility and the most burning love, her own Son, and together with Him she offered her own heart, full of agony, but still surrendered with the most perfect obedience to His holy will.

Our Saviour having been placed as a criminal before the whole Council, they commanded that He should be unbound, a ceremony usual in the case of delinquents when their confession was taken down, in order that they might answer with entire liberty. It appears that they did this in the case of our Saviour, because at the conclusion of the Council it is stated that they bound Him anew, as St. Mark observes,[3] that He might be delivered to the Governor. After He was unbound and His chains removed, they did not seek or interrogate any false witnesses, but in conformity with the course taken the night before and its issue, they inquired of Him in the name of the Council[4]—'If Thou be the Christ, tell us.' They had addressed the same question to Him another time when they sought Him in the Temple, and had said to Him[5]—'How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly;' and He told it them in such clear words that from His answer it resulted that they regarded Him as a blasphemer, and sought to stone Him as such. The stones which they then took in their hands without using, they now desired to cast at Him, and put Him

[3] xv. 1. [4] St. Luke xxii. 66. [5] St. John x. 24.

to death actually, therefore they asked of Him again as they had done before—'If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.'

Our Lord, Who saw into their hearts, replied[6]—'I know well that if I tell you you will not believe it on My word alone; and if I were to go about to prove it by reasons and testimonies drawn from the Law and the Prophets, and through them were to question and press you, still you would not answer Me, nor even on that account set Me at liberty. But although on this account you are not worthy to hear the truth as to which you inquire, since you desire to know it only to speak falsely against it, and to condemn Me on account thereof, it is nevertheless right that none should deem that it is through fear or any other reason I shrink from testifying to this truth, after having been questioned and examined upon it. I tell you, therefore, of a truth, that the Man Whom ye see here in humiliation and about to be judged by you, Him you shall soon see sitting at the right hand of the Power of God to be your Judge and the Judge of all the world.'

Having heard this answer, so full of modesty and truth, the judges, in order to give more force to their calumnious sentence and make their accusation more hateful, asked Him again,[7] 'Art Thou then the Son of God?'—showing at the same time, by their manner of speaking, their scorn and derision for His folly and falsehood, and that, for having given Himself out as the Son of God, and said that He should come seated on the clouds of heaven, at the right hand of God, He should see Himself between two thieves, raised upon a cross. Therefore, with covert irony, they asked Him—'Art Thou then the Son of God?' As if they had said—'Thou, the Son of a poor artisan, Thou, a Man of bad behaviour, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, Thou, Who art possessed by a devil and a blasphemer? Shalt thou sit at the right hand of God? Shall we behold Thee coming in the clouds? We desire to see Thee, in the midst of other thieves, hanging in the air, and not in the clouds or at the right hand of God.' Although our Saviour knew the malice of this

[6] St. Luke xxii. 67. [7] *Ibid.* 70.

question, and the false charge which they would found upon it, He nevertheless answered them the truth with the same firmness with which He had replied the night before—'You say that I am He,' which is the same as though He had said—'I am He Whom you speak of.'

As soon as they had heard this answer, and that He affirmed and ratified what He had said, they spoke one with another, and said, 'What need have we of witnesses, since we ourselves can witness that we have heard from His own mouth what is sufficient for His condemnation?' Two things they had heard which they turned into subjects of accusation against Him afterwards. The first was, that He was the Christ and the anointed King of the Jews. The second, that He was the Son of God. This second assertion was, in their opinion, a crime against God, for which, according to the law of God He merited death as a blasphemer; the other was a crime of treason[8] against Cæsar, for which He incurred the penalty of the cross, according to the Roman law. Armed, then, with these two accusations, they determined to bring the accused before the Governor, that the sentence might be executed upon Him.

[8] *Crimen læsæ Majestatis.*

CHAPTER XVI.

Our Saviour is brought before the Governor, and Judas hangs himself.

THERE is much matter for reflection in the circumstance that the business of our Lord's deliverance to Pilate was not put into the hands of three or four commissioners, or of the ordinary ministers of justice, to be transacted by them in the name of the Council with the Governor, but that the whole assembly of the Judges, of the Ancients and Scribes and High Priests,[1] and, in a word, the whole Council, as they were assembled to give judgment, now rose up without judgment, and spurred on by their passion and fury, led Him themselves to Pontius Pilate the Governor. They did this to give éclat and sensation to the business, and better to insure its success, as well as to put more pressure upon the Governor and force him to despatch it without interposing delay. So in order to bring to a head at once the matter now that it was in such good train, to smooth all difficulties as soon as they arose, and take counsel and prompt decision upon them, they removed the Assembly from its proper place and seats, and made it locomotive and transferable, making themselves accusers as well as judges, solicitors and advocates, canvassing and suborning the people. In this manner our Saviour was taken to the prætorium of Pilate, accompanied by the greatest and chiefest personages of Jerusalem. Then was fulfilled that which He had said,[2] that the chief of the priests should deliver Him to the Gentiles, and which also in a figure had been prophesied of Him in the sacrifices of the Lamb,[3] *Immolabitque eum universa multitudo*

[1] St. Luke xxii. 71; xxiii. 1. [2] St. Matt. xx. 19. [3] Exodus xii. 6.

filiorum Israel—that is, that He should be sacrificed by the whole multitude of the children of Israel.

They put our Saviour again in bonds for this march along the streets from the court of the Council to the prætorium of Pilate—that is, they would put His hands and His neck in chains of iron, as may be understood from the words of the Evangelists, *Vincientes Jesum, et vinctum adduxerunt eum*,[4] *et tradiderunt Pontio Pilato præsidi.* For it was the custom thus to bind criminals with chains when they were handed over by the ecclesiastical to the secular arm, as a sign that their cause had been already tried, and that they had been convicted and condemned. The day was farther advanced when our Saviour was brought out from the Council, and thus rumours of what was taking place had spread more widely throughout the city, so that the tumult and the multitudes of people who assembled to see this spectacle were much greater than before. And all regarded the matter as concluded, and our Saviour as condemned to death, since the whole Council had condemned Him, and were taking Him bound to the Governor that the sentence might be executed. This is what St. John says,[5] *Adducunt ergo Jesum a Caiapha in prætorium.* Not because they were taking Him from the house of Caiaphas, but only from the place of the Council, and it was tantamount to saying that on this occasion our Saviour was taken from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction (the head of which was Caiaphas as High Priest) and was delivered to the Gentiles.

It does not appear that Judas imagined, or at least had persuaded himself, that this business would go so far, or that the malice and passion of the priests were so great that they desired really in effect to put our Saviour to death, but rather that they would content themselves with some other and more moderate penalty, such as exile, or infamy, or corporal punishment. But as he kept watching[6] what they were doing, and saw that on the night before they had condemned Him to death in the house of Caiaphas, and how all the Council had now confirmed the sentence, and were carrying Him to the house of Pilate, that it

[4] St. Matt. xxvii. 2. [5] xviii. 28. [6] St. Matt. xxvii. 3.

might be put in execution, with an obstinate determination not to desist till their command was complied with—then the devil, who had blinded him and had entered into his heart to make him commit so abominable a treason, took firmer possession of him than ever, opening his eyes that he might know and abhor his crime, with disturbed and unquiet soul, and, full of sentiments proper to hell, might give himself up to despair. For the wretched man, now that he recognized his crime, and was sorry that he had committed it, might have grieved for it from love of the Lord Whom he had offended, and wept for it before God with the grief and bitterness of St. Peter, and have had recourse in his misery to the Blessed Virgin, who, although so grievously offended at him, would have been a means of his obtaining pardon and restoration to the favour of her Son. But as he was a man who had always been false and deceitful, and had walked with hypocrisy and feigning in the school of our Lord, therefore on this occasion he deserved not but to be forsaken and to miss his chance of entering into the right path. For he did not grieve over his sin from regard to God and with a pure will to serve Him and amend himself, nor was his repentance that of a true and profitable penitence, but only a profound sorrow and desperate sinking of heart, knowing the enormous fault he had committed, for which he grieved for his own sake, because he felt ashamed and dishonoured by having done it, and because men would reasonably abhor him for his iniquity. So in order to have done with them and with himself, he took a way whereby he succeeded in losing himself altogether.

For in the first place he attempted to undo the evil bargain which he had made, by returning to the High Priests their money, it seeming to him that he would free himself from being guilty of the evils which our Saviour might suffer in His Person for the future if He broke the contract, restoring the sum that he had received for Him. With this resolve he betook himself to the priests[7] when they were in the midst of all their heat and fury accusing our Lord in order to have Him put to death, and he gave them back the thirty pieces of silver, saying, 'I

[7] St. Matt. xxvii. 3.

have sinned, for I have delivered to death a just and innocent Man.' It was as if he had said, 'God will not be pleased that money so ill gained should remain in my possession, still less that on account of it I should be responsible for what this just Man suffers without His own fault, or that you should have any excuse for your malignity, by saying that I who knew Him and was His disciple have delivered Him to you. For I, who knew Him and have lived with Him and conversed with Him, affirm and testify to you that He is a just Man and a holy; and if I sold Him, it was my sin and iniquity, which I now acknowledge and recognize as such, and in testimony of this (and it is the greatest which a covetous man can give), I renounce my gains and interest, and I refuse to retain the price of it any longer in my power; take back your money!'

Who would not have imagined that the testimony and confession of Judas would have produced some effect on the minds of the priests? For although he was an evil and perverse man, still, after all, he belonged to their own faction, and as he had been their guide to take our Lord, so he might likewise have been in discharging Him and giving Him freedom. But they were so blinded and passionate that, when Judas said to them, 'I have sinned grievously in selling the blood of the just,' they turned away angrily, saying,[8] 'If thou hast sinned it is your own affair; what is that to us?' As if they had said—'We have got possession of what we were seeking for, we have obtained through thy means what we were aiming at. If thou hast sinned therein, lay that to thine own account—it is thine own affair; as for us, it does not touch us.'

O perverse Chief Priests! O ignorant and iniquitous answer! You confess that he of whom you bought the blood of the just has sinned; and do you say that the sin is his only, and that it is nothing to you? If it were evil to sell Him, it was you who bought Him; and if it were treason to deliver Him to you, you were a party to it; and if the crime which has driven Judas to despair was the having handed Him over to death, you are they who put Him to death and execute the evil deed! And yet,

[8] St. Matt. xxvii. 4

with all this, when Judas restores the price of the wicked sale, you on your part desire to sustain the contract, and yet you hold yourselves free from blame, saying—'Look you to your own sin; for us, we have nothing to do with it.'

Judas, seeing that the Chief Priests would not receive his money, and that as long as he had it in his possession he felt the qualms of death, went to the Temple[9] and cast down the money before the priests who were ministering there. Then, filled with misery and despair at what he had done, and incited by infernal furies, he took and hung himself with a halter, and as he hung, swelled until he burst in the midst,[10] as was publicly and notoriously known in Jerusalem.

O miserable man, worthy of the utmost punishment! The just payment due to thy wicked deeds was given thee, and because it would have been impossible for any one to inflict due punishment for such a sin, thou madest thyself judge of thine own crime and the executioner of its penalty. Abhorred by men and angels, thou wouldst not that the earth should receive thy body nor heaven thy soul, but thou didst choose the air for thy place, where the demons dwell, who made themselves lords over thee, and, as was prophesied, they seated themselves at thy right hand.[11]

O Judas! most wretched of men, and for whom it had been better that thou hadst never been born,[12] for thou didst add to thy great crime another still greater, in despairing of the mercy of God, which infinitely exceeds our sins! Wherefore, when in this sore distress, didst thou not recall to mind the time when thou wentest about in company with thy Lord, and the travail and labour which, like a good shepherd, He took upon Himself, seeking His sheep and bearing those who had gone astray on His shoulders, and all the love with which He invited and received sinners? And although thy crime was so great in every respect, thou oughtest to have remembered that thy Lord, albeit knowing thy intentions, yet Himself washed thy feet, and gave thee the Communion of the Body and Blood which He

[9] St. Matt. xxvii. 5. [10] Acts i. 18. [11] Psalm cviii. 6.
[12] St. Matt. xx. 24.

was about to offer for thee; and that even in the very act of thy betrayal of Him, when thou didst deliver Him up by a kiss, He invited thee to retain His friendship, and that even whilst thou wert performing the office of traitor He called thee friend.

O thou most unfortunate of all men! Even if thou dost not remember the goodness of the Son, at least remember the profound humility and gentleness of the Mother. For such was the Blessed Virgin that she herself would have gone with thee to her Son after His resurrection to bring about thy pardon. Even when He was hanging on the Cross, before He died, she would have interceded for thee and procured thy forgiveness. O man without hope! why couldst thou not trust that our Lord Himself, even as He prayed for others, would pray for thee also to the Eternal Father whilst He was suffering the torments and the travail of His Cross? But thou, blind man, overmastered for thy evil deeds by the devil, didst not remember the words and the life of our Lord, so as to hope in His mercy, but, accused by thy own conscience, didst permit thyself to sink into eternal condemnation under the weight of thy own crimes!

The Chief Priests were not willing to receive the money when Judas offered it to them, because they could not but see that he wished to annul the contract which he had made with them, and they knew that if they accepted the pieces they would in so doing oblige themselves to set our Lord at liberty, and to desist from their accusation of Him. This they in no manner of way were willing to do; on the contrary, they were determined to carry out their damnable and perverse intention until they had brought Him to the Cross. If it seemed to Judas that he had sinned in making such a covenant, they nevertheless deemed that they had done very well in the purchase they had made, since (according to some authors) they had taken the money from the public treasury of the Temple, under pretext of putting to death a blasphemer, as for a pious and religious purpose, and one that was for the honour and glory of God.

But when Judas had cast down the money in the Temple, the priests who were there took it and kept it,[13] until they

[13] St. Matt. xxvi. 6.

should see what the princes and magistrates should determine respecting it. These being more at leisure after the death of our Lord, and knowing what Judas had done, at first accepted the money, but they did not think it right to return it to the treasury or place where they kept the offerings, seeing that it was the price of blood, given and received to procure a man's death. They, therefore, agreed among themselves that they would purchase with it a field, which was called the Potter's field, and that it should be used to bury strangers in. In this way these wise doctors, that they might not lose the money, agreed to receive it as an offering, though they did not think it right to keep it in the place set apart for offerings. Although they saw no evil in taking it out of the treasury, to purchase with it the blood of a just and innocent Man, they saw harm in putting it back to the same place, after having made their purchase with it. And these holy and pious priests, who with so much rage and fury put to death the lawful and natural heir, entered into dealings for buying a field in which to bury strangers, whilst in truth they were only endeavouring to conceal and bury their own iniquity beneath this appearance of piety and religion. Nevertheless, God chastised them in their own invention, for the field which they bought was called from thenceforth[14] the field of blood, because they had bought it with the money which was given to Judas for selling to them the blood of his Maker. And thus, whenever the field was named, so often was renewed the remembrance of their crime.

[14] St. Matt. xxvi. 8.

CHAPTER XVII.

Pilate examines our Saviour and sends Him to Herod.

The Chief Priests then, and the rest, who had assembled in council, took our Saviour to the house and prætorium of the Roman Governor, who was called Pontius Pilate. They dragged Him thither bound shamefully in chains, that they might proclaim Him to the world as a criminal, in the custody of the officers and gaolers, low men destitute of all shame. He was followed by the priests and scribes, who were to be the agents and accusers in the cause, and in such haste were they to bring the matter to a conclusion and accomplish it, that after they had finished their council and reached the Governor's house, St. John says[1] it was still morning. The case was novel, such as has very rarely been seen. A Man Who two days before had preached in the Temple with so much majesty, and Whom, six days before, they had seen entering into Jerusalem with the most solemn triumph and the greatest acclamations of holiness that the world had ever witnessed, a Man Who, throughout the whole time of His teaching, had drawn all the people towards Him by the power of His miracles, and had been reverenced by them as a great prophet –to see Him now a prisoner, and ill-treated by the public authority of the whole council of priests, as being the most atrocious and dangerous of criminals –such a spectacle as this, doubtless, filled the people with so great astonishment that nothing else would be talked of for the time in the city, and they would invite and call on one another to come forth and see. It could hardly be that tidings of the event had not reached Pontius Pilate from the time of our Lord's apprehension the night before,

[1] xviii. 28.

and he, like a prudent man of the world, would find therein much matter for reflection on the sudden change of affairs. And knowing well that the cause would be brought before his tribunal, he was well prepared to examine into it with leisure and full attention.

The priests having then arrived at the prætorium or house of the Governor, and ascended to the portico which was raised above the street by a flight of steps, did not, however, enter the prætorium,[2] in order not to be rendered unclean or contaminated, and so unable to eat the unleavened bread and the other sacrifices which were specially offered during the whole week of the Pasch. For those holy and religious priests, who were endeavouring with so much malice to bring about our Saviour's death, deemed that it would contaminate and make them unclean to pass over the threshold of the prætorium, where men (although criminals) were condemned to death, and where the shedding of human blood was discussed. And so, remaining outside the entrance, they delivered up our Lord into the hands of the guards and officers of the Governor, excusing themselves on religious grounds from passing within the hall, and praying him to think it good to conclude the case at once, and execute the sentence of death on the Man, seeing that the matter was so serious and required so much haste that they had come in person to treat of it.

Jesus autem stetit ante præsidem.[3] Jesus was presented standing and in chains before the Governor, who, seeing the gentleness and modesty of our Saviour—and all the more if he perhaps conversed a little with Him at His first introduction, as to which the Evangelist says nothing—was immediately, as it seems, inclined to favour His cause. And he could not but perceive that the souls of the priests were filled with envy and malice, and that their determination not to enter into his house and prætorium was nothing but pure hyprocrisy and a simulation of holiness. But though he believed it to be so, he thought it requisite to comply with their request, and do so much honour to their Pasch and its ceremonies.

[2] St. John xviii. 28. [3] St. Matt. xxvii. 11.

Exivit ergo Pilatus ad eos foras[4]—'Pilate therefore went out to them.' But, having beheld the serenity and dignity of the accused, and the tumultuous passion and disturbance of the accusers, who, with so much violence and haste required sentence of death on Him, he was still more confirmed in his opinion, and said to them, perchance, what a successor of his said on a similar occasion,[5] 'It is not the custom of the Romans to condemn any man before he that is accused have his accusers present, and have liberty to make his answer, to clear himself of the things laid to his charge. You have brought to me a Man Who, to all appearance, is free from blame and is innocent.' *Quam accusationem affertis adversus hominem hunc?*[6]—'What accusation can you then bring against such a Man as this? For it seems contrary to reason and justice to deliver up the prisoner and not to declare whereof He is accused.'

It appears that the priests resented this inquiry of the judge, by which he implied either that they must be carried away by passion, or that they were ignorant. Considering it, therefore, hard that he should take it for granted that they must be either the one or the other, they said to him,[7] 'If He were not a public and notorious malefactor, we, who are priests and learned men, would not have delivered Him up to thee that thou mightest condemn Him.' As if to say, 'It ought to be enough to make thee feel thine own honour and conscience secure in doing what we ask of thee, that we ourselves come here to ask it.' Thus spoke the proud and furious priests. How much truth there was in their saying that our Saviour was a notorious malefactor, might have been known by information from those who had been freed from unclean spirits, from the sick who had been healed, and from the lepers who had been cleansed; from the deaf who had been made to hear, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, and the dead who had been restored to life. And if proof had been required that He was a great benefactor of the commonwealth, testimony might have been given by a man blind from his birth, who, by means of a little clay put upon his eyes had recovered sight, by a paralytic of thirty and eight years,

[4] St. John xviii. 29. [5] Acts xxv. 16. [6] St. John xviii. 29. [7] *Ibid.* 28.

who, at a single word, rose to his feet and took upon his shoulders the bed which for so many years had carried him, by a daughter of the Ruler of the Synagogue, who had been restored to life in the presence of three of His Apostles and of her father and mother. Nay, if these witnesses had been too few, and were thought prejudiced on account of being His disciples, all the city of Nain was witness of the resurrection of the son of the widow; a great part of the city of Jerusalem of the resurrection of Lazarus. And finally, in order to prove the benefits He had bestowed, thousands of witnesses might have been called to confirm each other's testimony, and whom, after He had healed in their presence many sick persons, He had fed miraculously in the desert. On the other hand, after having diligently sought for some evil deed, after having the night before canvassed and suborned so many witnesses, they could not discover, even by lying, anything against our Saviour. All this being so, and the whole people being under so great an obligation for these benefits, these men, who, for no cause whatever, hated our Lord and returned Him evil for good, regarded it as an insult that the judge should reflect before condemning Him, when they had said that He was worthy of death! And they relied so much on their own authority as to claim that He should be hung upon a cross as a malefactor, for no other reason than that they said He was such.

Pilate could not but clearly see by their answer, how great were the pride and arrogance of these persons. He perceived, like a prudent and sagacious man, that hatred and passion were mixed up in this business, and that there must be some deeper cause than was visible to the outward eye, seeing they required that such a Man as this, One Who was held to be so holy a Prophet, and Whom they had brought before him so suddenly and so early in the morning, with so much haste and without declaring His crime or the cause of His accusation, should be condemned to suffer death upon the cross. Therefore, with much sagacity and good management, he answered,[8] 'If, as you say, this Man is so great a malefactor, take Him you, and condemn

[8] St. John xviii. 31.

Him according to your law.' It is as if he had said to them, 'It is clear that men like you would not require any one to be put to death without having satisfied yourselves that he merits it, still I cannot pronounce sentence merely on what you may know, for, conformably to the laws of the Romans, the judge should have the accusation in writing as well as the evidence to support it. If your law permits that a man should be condemned to death with so much haste and violence, and without hearing him or knowing why, take him yourselves and condemn him agreeably to your law; as for me and as far as I am concerned, I will not hinder you.'

To this answer of the Governor, they replied, saying,[9] 'It is not lawful for us to condemn any one to death.' Which answer they made for one of three reasons, either that the Romans, who were their masters, had deprived them of this privilege that they might not make a bad use of it, although they allowed them to be governed by their own law in some cases; or because, on account of its being the season of the Pasch, they could not pronounce this sentence, as for this same reason they had excused themselves from entering the prætorium; or because they could not sentence to the death of the cross, seeing that it was not a penalty contained in their law, but introduced by the Romans into Judæa. And it was their desire to put our Lord to this kind of death, as being the more infamous and shameful. Therefore they did not wish to avail themselves of the permission given them by the Governor. As if they had said, 'The crimes of this Man are so atrocious that no other kind of death would suffice for His chastisement; He merits the most terrible, which is that of the cross, and if there were any other worse kind of torture and outrage it ought to be inflicted on Him, but since it is not lawful for us to punish Him by means of this penalty, we have come to thee that thou mayest condemn Him to be crucified and see that the sentence is executed.' That they were influenced by all these reasons is a supposition favoured by what the Evangelist St. John[10] adds, that through this answer given by the Jews was accomplished that which our

[9] St. John xviii. 31. [10] *Ibid.* 32.

Saviour Himself had said, signifying what death He should die. What our Lord had said concerning His death was, as to its manner, that it would be that of the cross, as to the time, that it would be at the Pasch, and as to the executioners, that it would be by the hand of the Gentiles.

The priests, then, seeing what was the disposition of the judge, and that he was not minded to proceed in the cause without an accusation, spoke, saying,[11] *Hunc invenimus subvertentem gentem nostram, et prohibentem tributa dare Cæsari, et dicentem*, etc. In this accusation they laid three things to His charge. First, that He disturbed and raised tumults among the people, affirming that they themselves had found Him out in these seditious and traitorous proceedings. Secondly, that He had forbidden tribute to be paid to Cæsar, as though He had taught that the chosen people ought not to pay tribute to an idolatrous and Gentile Emperor. Thirdly, that He taught and behaved as though He were an anointed King. They knew perfectly well what calumny all this was, for how could He Who was never to be found in secret assemblies or meetings incite to sedition? His discourses were ordinarily delivered in the Temple and in the public synagogues whither all the people resorted, and there He exhorted them to be subject to and to obey even these self same Scribes and Pharisees themselves, because they held the place and sat in the chair of Moses; and when they went to seek Him by night in the Garden, they found Him with His disciples engaged in prayer. As to the tribute, how false their statement was is clearly proved from the time when they asked Him deceitfully, and to catch Him in His words,[12] if it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not, and He answered them, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.' The very tax farmers and collectors were witnesses, not only of what He taught with regard to paying tribute, but that He Himself was accustomed to pay it. And then, how far He was from attempting to incite the people to make Him a King in this world (as they represented) was evident[13] from one occasion when

[11] St. Luke xxiii. 2 [12] St. Mark xii. 17. [13] St. John vi 15.

the people desiring to make Him King, He fled and hid Himself from their presence. This was so; but those wicked priests concealing for the time the reason for which they had condemned Him in their Council, and which was because He had called Himself the Son of God (for this would have had little influence upon a man who was a Gentile), accused Him, in defiance of truth and against conscience, of a false crime, which would appear more odious to the Governor, because of its being against Cæsar and against the tribute and custom due to him.

Pilate, having heard the accusation, rejected the other articles, and addressed himself solely to the clause concerning the kingdom, in which was likewise contained what they had said respecting the tribute, because if He were or had called Himself King, it was certain that He would hinder tribute from being paid to Cæsar. And as this was an invidious matter and might occasion popular tumult and insurrection, he went back again into the prætorium or audience chamber, to examine our Saviour in private, leaving the Jews outside, for they would not enter (as has been said above) on account of their Pasch and its ceremonies. Then calling our Lord before him,[14] he inquired of Him first, 'Art Thou King of the Jews?' All the four Evangelists[15] agree that he examined and interrogated our Lord in the first place on this point, because, though he was a Gentile, still, as he lived among the Jews, he had heard speak of the King Messias Whom they were expecting, and the fame of the works done by our Saviour was very great; and on the other hand, they had accused Him of styling Himself the anointed King, or the Christ, therefore he asked Him, 'Art Thou the King of the Jews?' always supposing that the Kingdom of which He spoke was temporal and earthly.

Our Saviour, Who had not been present when Pilate had been conferring with His accusers, concealing what He knew, answered,[16] 'Dost thou ask Me concerning the Kingdom,

[14] St. John xviii. 33.
[15] St. Matt. xxvii. 11; St. Mark xv. 2; St. Luke xxiii. 3.
[16] St. John xviii. 34.

because thou art in doubt respecting it, or is it a part of the accusation which has been brought against Me?' By this He gave him to understand that He knew well by whom that stone was hurled, although those who had cast it had concealed their hand; as though he had said, 'It is clear that thou neither thinkest nor believest that I am a King, or that I seek to be one: therefore thou hast addressed this question to me because information has been given thee on this point against Me, and others have suggested that thou shouldst ask Me of it.'

Pilate, perceiving, as he thought, that our Saviour by these words intended to imply that he had allowed the Jews to make an impression on him so as to ask what he had neither thought of nor believed, replied with some resentment and roughness,[17] 'Am I perchance a Jew, that I should know aught of these things that you Jews speak of concerning the Kingdom of the Messias, or still more, that I should care ought about them? If I put this question to Thee, it is not because it is a matter which concerns me one way or the other; but I ask Thee in the capacity of judge about the charges which have been brought against Thee. Thy own countrymen, and of them not the lower ranks, but the pontiffs and the priests of Thy law, have delivered Thee into my hands. What is it that Thou hast done?' As if to say, 'Either Thou hast made Thyself King without being one, or if Thou art one, what hast Thou done that they will not recognize or receive Thee?'

In these words of the judge—*Quid fecisti?* what might not our Saviour have answered in His defence, seeing what and how many were the works which He had done? But as Pilate had addressed to Him two questions, first, respecting His Kingdom, whether He were King, and secondly, as to what He had done, that is to say, what crimes He had committed on account of which the Jews had delivered Him up, He replied to them in their order, saying, in answer to the first[18]—'My Kingdom is not of this world;' and by His Kingdom He meant not only the Heavenly Kingdom of the Blessed, but the congregation of the faithful people in this world, which is the

[17] St. John xviii. 35. [18] *Ibid.* 36.

Catholic Church, and therefore He did not say, 'My Kingdom is not in this world, because it is in this world, it is not earthly nor temporal, because it derives its origin from Heaven, whence I came down to gather it together through My teaching by means of faith, to redeem it from the power of its enemies by My death, to sanctify it with the sacraments, to bathe it in My Blood, to beautify it with My grace, and to give it life by My Spirit. My Kingdom is not of this world, because it does not consist in the goods of this world, but in contempt of them goes on its way to life and eternal salvation.'

Our Saviour said this to Pilate to undeceive him, but still more the Jews, who had declared that He merited death because He had endeavoured to raise Himself in His Kingdom against Cæsar. Therefore He said—'My Kingdom is not of this world; I am not seeking to take from you the temporal kingdom, but to give you the eternal. This is the matter respecting which thou mayest take heed, and which thou art bound to investigate for the fidelity which thou owest to Cæsar; and of this I assure you, that no temporal King has any reason to fear or shrink from My Kingdom. Because if My Kingdom were of this world I should certainly have servants, and ministers, and soldiers,[19] as other Kings have, who would fight for Me, and prevent Me from being delivered to the Jews. But this is so far from being the case, that when one of My disciples who was in the Garden endeavoured to defend Me with arms, I forbade him and reproved him, for, in truth, My Kingdom is not from hence below, nor of this world.' After this manner our Saviour tempered His answer to the Gentile Governor; so that in a few words He repeated three times over, that He had a Kingdom, that He might not deny nor conceal that Kingdom which His Eternal Father had given Him, and so often also He said that His Kingdom was not of this world, that He might free Pilate from the vain fear of His having desired to rebel against Cæsar, and prevent his tribute from being paid. 'Presently as to the manner,' said Pilate, whether Your Kingdom be or be not of this world: but after

[19] St. John xviii. 36.

all, 'Art Thou a King?' Our Saviour modestly assented, saying—'Thou sayest that I am a King.'

Continuing the conversation, He replied to the second question which had been put to Him[20]—*Quid fecisti?* and spoke thus—'For this was I born, and for this end I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth.' That is, always to speak the truth. As though He had said—'Do not doubt the truth of what I have spoken to you concerning My Kingdom, because I cannot speak anything but the truth, and for this I was born and for this I came into the world, and I have done nothing else since I was in it. All those who love the truth and those who are on the side of truth, and have pleasure in it, gladly hear My words and receive My doctrine.' By this answer He at the same time showed clearly and modestly the cause wherefore the Jewish priests abhorred Him, which was nothing else than because He had spoken the truth, whilst they were so far removed from it. Then Pilate asked Him—'What is truth?' and without waiting His answer, arose and went out to give a reply to the Jews and priests who were expecting him outside.

It appears that this conversation resulted in satisfying Pilate, and making him feel persuaded that our Saviour was not to blame in the matter of which they accused Him, and that there was no cause for condemning Him to death as they required; for He Himself confessed that He did not possess a kingdom in this world, nor did He pretend to any; and this His confession was supported by the scanty pomp and surroundings of a King which He possessed. But the Governor did not care to continue the discourse respecting what He had tacitly brought forward against the priests, that they abhorred the truth, and hated Him because He preached it. Therefore, our Saviour having said that He was born to speak the truth, and that those who loved the truth heard Him gladly, Pilate, with the disdain and authority of a superior, asked Him—'What is truth?' and he arose without giving Him an opportunity of answering, thereby making a show of great superiority, and

[20] St. John xviii. 35.

proving that he did not put the question in order to listen to all He had to say, but to cut Him short, making little account of Him. For it is common for those in authority not to desire to hear the truth or to know what it is. Or perhaps Pilate, remembering that the priests and scribes, and the chief among the Jews were waiting for Him outside, did not think it right to detain them, and so, having satisfied himself on the principal point, he cut short all further discussion, and went out to give them his answer, saying to them[21]—'I have examined this Man respecting that of which you accuse Him, and after having seen Him, I do not find any cause in Him wherefore I should condemn Him to death.' This was the first audience which our Saviour had with Pilate, and the first time that he gave testimony of His innocence, and of the injustice and fury of His accusers.

The Chief Priests, then, seeing the ill success which had attended their petition, and knowing, perchance, or conjecturing what our Saviour had answered in regard to His spiritual Kingdom, that it was not a kingdom of this world, they imagined, as was natural to them, that by those deceiving words and subtle reasons He had perverted the judge, and had skilfully shifted the question as to the kingdom to a spiritual sense. Then[22] they broke out all the more furiously, crying out—'It is very well to say that He does not desire to be King of this world, when He stirreth up all the people, teaching and preaching throughout all Judæa. For He began first in Galilee (where He called together the Apostles, and began to gather a sect together), and the commotion, tumult, and excitement of the people have reached as far as this city.' They said this, perhaps, because a few days before, at the procession of the palms,[23] the whole city had been moved, saying—'Who is this?'

Pilate, seeing that the business was becoming more perplexed, was desirous to free himself as far as possible from it, and hearing Galilee mentioned, he inquired if the Man were a

[21] St. John xviii. 38; St. Luke xxiii. 4. [22] St. Luke xxiii. 5.
[23] St. Matt. xxi. 10.

Galilean,[24] and finding that He belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod, he determined to send Him to him, for, either on account of the Pasch, or for some other reason, he was at that time staying at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Herod mocks our Saviour and treats Him as a fool.

This Herod was called Antipas,[1] Tetrarch of the Province of Galilee, and brother of Philip, Tetrarch of Ituræa, and of Archelaus, Tetrarch of Judæa. Archelaus, through sinister charges brought against him, had been banished by the Emperor to Vienne in France, and after this Judæa began to be ruled by Governors, of whom Pontius Pilate was the sixth. All these three brothers abovenamed were sons of Herod, King of Judæa, called the Ascalonite, who had massacred the Innocents, hoping among them to put our Saviour to death. His son then was Herod the Tetrarch, and at this time was staying in Jerusalem. He was so profligate as to have taken his brother Philip's wife, and was now living publicly in adultery with her. And because St. John Baptist had reproved him for this scandal, he had commanded him to be beheaded at the instigation of this woman. He was, moreover, so ambitious that in order to obtain the kingdom of Judæa, of which his brother Archelaus had been deprived, he lost no opportunity of doing pleasure to and gaining the goodwill of the Jews. For this cause he went to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Pasch, and for the self same cause he afterwards, on the same feast, commanded the Apostle St. James to be beheaded,[2] and seized St. Peter with the intention of delivering him up after

[24] St. Luke xxiii. 6. [1] St. Luke iii. 1. [2] Acts xii. 2.

the Pasch to the will of the people.[3] This Herod was at enmity with Pilate,[4] either because he wished to revenge the death of some Galileans whom Pilate had executed with much cruelty, or in order thereby to flatter the Jews, on whom Pilate had inflicted many vexations, or finally, because Pilate held the government of Judæa which Herod so greatly aimed at and coveted, so that the slightest cause was enough for them as a reason for getting up grievances and enmities. Monsters of this sort were the men who then ruled, and to such hands was committed the cause of our Saviour.

Pilate, then, perceiving His innocence and the rage and fury of the Jews, forgot his own quarrel with Herod and took the opportunity of paying him the compliment of sending him so distinguished a prisoner, as a most excellent gift and royal present; deeming perchance, that being by profession a Jew, Herod would understand better than he the charge made against Him, of making Himself the King Messias, and also because he was His legitimate governor, and so would be better able to defend Him from His accusers. Whatever were the motives by which he was actuated in exempting himself and getting rid of a matter so obscure and perplexed as this, he acted like a weak judge. For although he knew the truth, he lacked the courage to defend it, and imagined that he did enough in sending the case to an impure and ambitious man, who, in order to please an adulteress, had put the Baptist to death, and who, that he might give pleasure to the Jews, might also put our Saviour to death. It is also probable that the Chief Priests when they found that they did not gain their end with Pilate were not unwilling to go to Herod, because they knew that he desired to do what would please them, and that being a vicious man and an enemy of the truth, they might easily impress him with hatred against its Author and Preacher. They would

[3] [The author has here mistaken the Herod mentioned in the Acts as the persecutor of the Church for this Herod Antipas. The Herod who put St. James to death, and imprisoned St. Peter, was Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great.]

[4] St. Luke xiii. 1.

especially recall to his memory that this Man was He Whom his father had sought to kill when he massacred so many innocents, regarding Him with suspicion almost as soon as He had been born. What, therefore, would he not do now if he had Him in his hands, after He had gone about stirring up the people, and now that His intentions had been discovered? In this manner God ordained in His secret Providence that all the tribunals and judges that were in Jerusalem should take cognizance of the cause, and that before them all should be made manifest the innocence of our Lord, and that also He should give us new examples of His integrity, gentleness, and humility. The report went forth, then, from the prætorium of Pilate, that Jesus was being taken to King Herod, and on hearing the noise and clamour of the officers and servants who were coming forth, the multitude assembled once more to behold our Saviour, Who was being hurried along bound in chains, and with the same shame and dishonour as before. The messenger of Pilate to Herod went first with many compliments. The Chief Priests also presented themselves to make their charges and give their information, and then came our Saviour Himself in the midst of the officers of justice bound and a prisoner. Herod was very glad when he saw Him,[5] for he had desired a long time past to know Him by sight because of what he had heard respecting Him; he also greatly wished to behold some miracle performed in his presence. *Interrogabat autem eum multis sermonibus;*[6] he therefore began to seek to enter into conversation with Him on many and various subjects. He would, doubtless, say what satisfaction it gave him that so distinguished a Man should have been born in his country and province of Galilee; how much he had desired to know Him, how great had been the fame of His doctrine and His miracles; how rejoiced he was to behold Him, and on an occasion when he would have it in his power to help Him to escape from His present difficulty; he would promise Him his favour if He would do his pleasure in what he asked; he would ask Him if He were the Man to Whom at His birth the Kings of the East had come to worship

[5] St. Luke xxiii. 8. [6] *Ibid.* 9.

Him, Whose coming had so greatly troubled his father and the whole city, or, if as others had said,[7] He were John Baptist, whom he himself had beheaded, and if it were true that He had been restored to life in order to perform so many miracles. Concerning His miracles he inquired of Him whether that which had been said of Him were true, because it appeared to him that, if it were so, it was something more than human. He begged Him to perform some one of these miracles here before him, and not to make a great difficulty in doing for him what He gave to others for nothing; seeing that he was His judge and His king, and that the case of His life was in his hands.

At ipse nihil illi respondebat.[8] Our Saviour was firm in His resolve not only not to perform any miracle, but not even to reply by a single word. Pilate He had answered, and had explained to him at length and in detail what he had asked respecting His Kingdom, because although he was a Gentile he inquired with a desire to know the truth and to defend it, which he endeavoured to do, although he was afterwards conquered through his own weakness. But Herod He would not answer, because he was a vicious and impure man, and on that account abhorred the truth to such a degree that he had beheaded John Baptist (who was the Voice of Jesus Christ) because he told it to him. How, therefore, could our Saviour be otherwise than dumb in presence of the man who so blindly and passionately had deprived His Voice of life?

Herod was moreover curious and ambitious, and sought no other good from beholding the miracles of our Saviour than to see some novelty which would surprise him, or some piece of jugglery which would entertain him. Moreover, he desired that our Lord should perform them solely on his account, before him, and in order to give pleasure to his courtiers, by showing them some of the most secret and admirable of His works, and conversing with them on the most recondite of the doctrines which He taught, just to gratify him and doing him pleasure as a vassal to his lord. But the Lord of Majesty would not condescend to play the part of King Herod's juggler, nor would

[7] St. Matt. xiv. 2. [8] St. Luke xxiii. 9.

He deign to give to the proud and curious that which He had so freely communicated to the humble and simple. As little did He desire that it should be imagined He was ready to adapt Himself to the tastes of the King, so as thereby to escape the death to which He offered Himself of His own free will, or that He would bend to prayers or supplications, or have recourse to any human means whereby to obtain His liberty.

After this manner He sets us by His silence an example of humility, despising the honours and favours of princes, and not caring for the jeers and scoffs of their courtiers. Moreover, He placed before us a model of constancy and firmness, in not allowing that the power of performing miracles should minister in any way to the ambition and curiosity of King Herod, teaching us thereby to make very little account of the favour of rulers, who often speak of the things of God, and wish us to speak of them to them, not that they may receive profit, but only out of a vain curiosity to know everything for reasons of State, or out of vanity to seem to know all, or to make use of every one.

Stabant autem principes sacerdotum et scribæ constanter accusantes eum.[9] The Chief Priests and the Scribes, who had been present during all this, listened with great attention, fearing what might be the result. At first, seeing that Herod was so desirous for miracles, and believing that our Saviour would perform one which would altogether gain his favour, they accused Him vehemently and without losing a moment—doubtless of matters which would make Him an object of suspicion and hatred to the King. For, as they had accused Him before the High Priest of having boasted that He would destroy the Temple and of having made Himself the Son of God, and then had accused Him before Pilate of having made Himself King and prevented the payment of tribute to Cæsar, so now, in addition to all this, they would accuse Him, before Herod, of having concerted with John Baptist to cast infamy upon him because of his adultery with Herodias; that whilst he was keeping John in prison[10] this man had praised John and had

[9] St. Luke xxiii. 10. [10] St. Matt. xi. 11.

taken his part in a public discourse, which was as much as to condemn Herod as a tyrant, since he had put in prison so great a prophet; that besides this He had insulted him in the face of the people, by calling him 'that fox:'[11] and that he would not be able to hold his kingdom securely now that his enemy had arrived at man's estate, seeing that his father was not secure when He was only a child; and other like things. Then, perceiving that, because of the great silence of our Lord, Herod looked upon Him as a fool and an idiot, and fearing that, for that reason, he might set our Lord at liberty, they accused Him still more violently and persistently, saying that He was a hypocrite and a dissembler Who was now pretending to be dumb, though He knew very well how to speak, and had spoken when He was before the people, and had made them all troubled and unsettled. *Stabant ergo principes sacerdotum et scribæ, constanter accusantes eum.*

Sprevit autem illum Herodes cum exercitu suo[12]—'Herod with his soldiers set Him at nought.' It seemed to Herod that our Lord had made light of him, and that the best way to escape the affront was to treat Him also as of no account. And such is the effect of different dispositions in different persons—the silence of our Saviour had excited the admiration of Pilate, and the same silence gave Herod occasion to despise Him; for the one looked at things as a wise and sagacious judge, and the other as a vain and ambitious man of the world, who might be satisfied with compliments and outward show. And as he saw that he had not been able to draw a single word from our Saviour, either of thanks for the many offers made Him, or of supplications to be delivered from the danger He was in of death, and of a death so infamous and atrocious, or of exculpation, or of justification of the numerous charges which had been imputed to Him, it seemed to him (as was indeed the truth) that such philosophy as this could not have its source in any human wisdom, and that the Man must be a fool. Therefore, he despised Him as a weak, impotent creature, Who could not perform any miracle at all, and as a stupid person Who did not

[11] St. Luke xiii. 32. [12] *Ibid.* xxiii. 11.

know how to plead for Himself, or profit by the good opportunity offered Him for procuring His own liberty. This is the wisdom of the world, which looks upon the wisdom of God as foolishness.

The courtiers and soldiers of the guard then began to scoff at and mock our Saviour, with words, with jesting nicknames and bursts of laughter, and it may be with blows likewise, as people at Court treat stupid and foolish persons. Herod commanded Him to be dressed in a white garment, as an innocent and idiot, and would not take cognizance of the cause, but sent Him back to Pilate with full liberty to do with Him as he would. Through these reciprocal compliments and courtesies, Herod and Pilate became friends that same day,[13] and after having both sought to have nothing to do with the matter, and to extricate themselves from it, they concerted together[14] the death of our Saviour, each one in his own way putting Him to torment and then leaving Him to the will of the other, when by reason of their office each of them ought to have set Him free.

[13] St. Luke xxiii. 12. [14] Acts iv. 27.

CHAPTER XIX.

Pilate examines our Saviour a second time, and a second time testifies to His innocence.

A SECOND time was our Saviour led through the public streets from the palace of Herod to the prætorium of Pilate, accompanied by the same cortege of officials, and amidst the same clatter of arms, but now treated with greater rudeness and discourtesy than before by those who conducted Him, and who cast upon Him the blame of so many comings and goings. There was also a greater uproar raised by the people who crowded together, who had now more to talk of in the sport that had taken place among the soldiers of Herod, and whose curiosity to look on Him was more eagerly excited now that He had come forth from the palace decorated with a white garment, that every one might mock at Him as a fool—an office which the world is wont to perform very carefully, clothing everything in a robe of its own choosing, that all may judge of it accordingly. Thus it covers vices with a cloak of virtue, calling talkativeness discretion, licence fine manners, cunning wisdom, and revenge fortitude and valour, whilst on the other hand it clothes virtue with very different garments, calling prudence boorishness, looking on modesty as stupidity, devotion as hypocrisy, and simplicity and truth as dulness and folly. In order to be able to do this it has at hand all kinds of vestments; that is to say, of reasons and arguments by which it can give to everything any colour it pleases, just as Herod found ready to his hand the white garment in which he caused our Saviour to be mocked.

The Blessed Virgin knew each moment what was going on, and, though at a distance, she always watched all these

processions, and if she then saw her Son on His journey, who shall say what were the feelings which were awakened in her heart when she beheld the Wisdom of God clothed in that new livery and vestment?

Thus they arrived at the prætorium, and Pilate was informed of the decision of Herod, and that he found no cause worthy of death in our Saviour. Then, that he might satisfy the Jews, and that they should not think that the first time he had examined our Lord he had dealt with too light a hand, and not fulfilled his office with all requisite integrity and severity, and in order also to free himself from all suspicion, he called into his presence[1] the Chief Priests and the magistrates and the rest of the people, and began a second time to examine our Saviour before them respecting the matters of which He had been accused. But nothing of any importance resulting from this, he said to them all[2]—'You have brought before me this Man as being a blasphemer and seditious, and one Who has stirred up and disquieted the people; Who, moreover, has drawn them away from the worship of God and the observance of the law, as well as from obedience and the service of Cæsar. Behold, I have examined Him, not secretly, as on the first occasion, but before you all in public, lest you should suspect some deceit, but I do not find in Him any cause of death, or any crime in those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor Herod either, to whom, as you have seen, I remitted Him; and Herod having heard all you had to say to your full content, you could not prove against Him anything that was worthy of death, so he contented himself with clothing Him in a white raiment, thereby making a jest of Him and of you, who with so much violence have accused a simple and innocent Man. It is certain that if this Man had broken your law, Herod, who understands and professes it, would have convicted Him. But He has neither committed any crime against your law, since Herod has not discovered it, nor against the Roman law, since neither have I. But as it may chance that He has roused your hostility by some excess or

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 13. [2] *Ibid.* 14.

other, by some imprudence or neglect of duty,[3] I will chastise Him with some slight chastisement, and then release Him.'

Et accusabant eum summi sacerdotes in multis. Then the Chief Priests, perceiving that the judge was inclined to permit our Saviour to escape with His life, were enraged beyond measure, because of the hatred they bore Him, as well as the fear they had conceived of finding him again against them. For as they had already experienced the force of His words in teaching and in reproving, and the power of His miracles, with which He had gained over the people to Himself, what could they expect to result now but the loss of their honour and their interest? Therefore, they laboured with all their might to undermine, or rather to deceive, the Governor, accusing Him of many things in order to prove Him a hypocrite and a dissembler, and to show that He was a stirrer up of the people in very truth, and was a blasphemer against God and a traitor to Cæsar.

Et cum accusaretur[4] *à principibus sacerdotum et senioribus nihil respondit.* Our Saviour, with great modesty and dignity, kept silence under these accusations. He had on the first occasion answered Pilate himself what was enough, and only what was of importance to His cause, that is, what regarded the question relative to His Kingdom; and this He had done because Pilate inquired with a desire to know the truth. But to the accusations of the Chief Priests He did not chose to answer; for all was mere loud talk and confusion, calumnies as to His going about the country, as to His having preached, as to the miracles which He had performed, the disciples whom He had gathered together, and other similar things, all of which had been, and were, public and notorious, and respecting which He had said the night before to Caiaphas,[5] that He was not the person to be asked about them. He had only to ask in order to be informed of them. Besides, they did not inquire of Him from a desire to know the truth, and they would not have believed, even if our Lord had told them.[6]

[3] St. Luke xxiii. 16. [4] St. Matt. xxvii. 12.
[5] St. John xviii. 21. [6] St. Luke xxiii. 67.

Nor did it appear to Him that His cause required defence; therefore He did not attempt to repulse these accusations in words, but to despise them by silence. On which account St. Ambrose says[7]—*Accusatur Dominus, et tacet; et bene tacet quis defensione non indiget; ambiunt defendi qui timent vinci: non ergo accusationem tacendo confirmat, sed despicit non repellendo*—'The Lord is accused," says the Saint, 'and He is silent, and with good reason He is silent, because He has no need of defence. Those who fear to be conquered desire to be defended, but our Lord does not confirm by silence the charge brought against Him, but rather despises it by not refuting it.'

Pilate, astonished at such profound silence and serenity, said to Him,[8] 'Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?' For in truth, our Lord stood there before him as entirely without perturbation, or any sign or mark thereof, as if He had heard nothing of what had been said, as it had been written of Him,[9] *Ego autem tanquam surdus non audiebam*—'I was as though deaf and heard not;' and He remained silent as though He had been dumb. *Et sicut mutus non aperiens os suum*—'And as a dumb man,' He says, 'who does not open his mouth.' Therefore, the judge having said to Him 'Hearest Thou not?' he said also to Him, 'Answerest Thou nothing?[10] Behold of how many things they accuse Thee.' But our Saviour answered never a word, so that the Gentile Governor wondered[11] at such sublime philosophy, and was like a man frightened and astonished, without knowing the cause whence proceeded this new and unusual silence. And the Chief Priests ought also to have revered and wondered at it the more, since they had read that which is written in Isaias,[12] *Quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum*—'As a lamb before her shearers He shall be dumb, and shall not open His mouth."

[7] Lib. x. in Luke xv. [8] St. Matt. xxvii. 13. [9] Psalm xxxvii. 14.
[10] St. Mark xv. 4. [11] St. Matt. xxvii. 14. [12] liii. 7.

CHAPTER XX.

Barabbas is preferred to our Saviour.

From all these things Pilate was persuaded, and considered it as certain, that the Chief Priests[1] had delivered up our Saviour through envy and malice alone; and so he took more pains and diligence to find some means whereby to release Him. And now, since he had not been able to liberate Him as an innocent man, he determined to try and free Him as a criminal. And his way was this. The Jews had a custom that every year, during the Pasch, in memory of the liberation from Egypt, and to add greater rejoicing and solemnity to the festival, the Governor should release unto them a criminal from the prison,[2] at their will, whomsoever they themselves chose and asked for. As this boon was granted in favour of the people, the multitude had at this time come to the house of Pilate[3] to beg of him to grant the favour he had been always wont to grant in preceding years. Pilate therefore thought that this occasion gave him an opportunity of setting free our Saviour, because at that time he had in prison a notable criminal, famous for his wicked and evil deeds, who was moreover a robber,[4] and likewise a turbulent man, a stirrer up of the people,[5] and seditious, who, in a certain tumult which had taken place in the city, had committed murder. Although in past years the people had chosen freely[6] whomsoever they would, it was not so this time, for the Governor obliged them to ask for one of two persons, either Barabbas or Christ our Lord. And so he spoke to them, saying[7]—'Whom will ye that I shall release unto you,

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 18. [2] St. Mark xv. 6. [3] *Ibid.* 8.
[4] St. John xviii. 40. [5] St. Mark xv. 7. [6] *Ibid.* 6.
[7] St. Matt. xxvii. 17.

Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?' He placed them one against the other because he felt certain that all their prosecution of our Lord was nothing but envy, and he believed that it was not possible they could be so led away by passion, or so blind, as not to see plainly the punishment which Barabbas merited, and therefore they would not dare to set him at liberty rather than our Lord, if it were only that the people might not discover by so evident a sign the passion by which they were actuated.

The malice, however, of the Chief Priests was greater than it seemed to this layman and Gentile. For hearing what the judge proposed, and knowing that the multitude had always listened with admiration to the doctrine of our Lord, and had reverenced His miracles, they feared that He would be released by their votes. They therefore mingled among them, and some in one group, some in another, began to canvass and solicit them, persuading them by apparent reasons to beg liberty for Barabbas and death for our Saviour.[8] 'For though it be true,' they would say, 'that Barabbas is a robber and a murderer, still it is one thing to be a robber, and a much worse to be a blasphemer. And if it is an evil thing to kill a man in a quarrel, what is that in comparison to having offered to destroy this holy Temple of God, which is reverenced by all the world? Moreover, it is a much less thing to stir up some dispute or question in the city than to excite the whole country to sedition and disturbance, and if Barabbas should not amend in return for the benefits which he will have received at your hands, you will always be able to chastise him at your pleasure; besides, he will always bear so vividly in remembrance the strait in which he has found himself, and will be under such an obligation for the boon you will have conferred, that you will find in him a slave who will never offer you any further resistance or contradiction. But this Man is so self-satisfied, and so free in saying what He thinks, that He will not show the least gratitude to you for liberating Him, nor will He be in the least point different from

[8] St. Matt. xxvii. 20.

what He has been hitherto, going about from place to place, fostering the evil humours of the people, with great danger that if we show mercy now that we are able to remedy the mischief, we shall never be able to remedy it when we wish. Besides, who can tell what is the meaning of the judge? For may be, as this Man has been accused of desiring to make Himself King, and to excite the people to rebel against Cæsar, Pilate, cunningly and craftily, puts the question whether you demand His release in order to draw from your answer an argument that you looked upon and desired to have Him as King, and to bring down upon us all the power of the Romans!' With these and similar reasons the Chief Priests moved[9] and stirred up the people against our Saviour.

Then, seeing that they delayed to make answer, Pilate said to them a second time—'What decision do you make, and which of the two do you desire should be set at liberty?' The intention of Pilate was very clearly to show favour to our Saviour; nor in this did he act with cunning and duplicity, but because in truth he so judged[10] that, according to what had been alleged and proved, our Lord deserved to be released,[11] and that was the object he endeavoured to accomplish and desired. Nevertheless, to set Him at liberty, by putting Him in competion with Barabbas, was a very poor favour, since, even were He released and His life granted, it was not as an innocent man, but as a criminal and malefactor, and solely by reason of the privilege of the Pasch, and by the vote of the common people, in opposition to the opinions of the Chief Priests and Scribes, and by comparison with a man of crime and sedition like Barabbas. So that it was a great insult merely to set Him up against such a man, whichever of the two were chosen. Yet even this small favour the people were not willing to do Him, for having been well influenced and persuaded by the priests,[12] they all cried out with one voice[13]—'Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas.' So great was the hatred they had conceived against Him that, in their rage and spite, they would

[9] St. Mark xv. 11. [10] Acts iii. 13.
[11] St. Luke xxiii. 20. [12] *Ibid.* 18. [13] *Ibid.*

not even call Him by His name, saying[14]—'Not this Man, but Barabbas.'

This outrage our Saviour received from His own people, and it was perchance the greatest which He received during the whole course of His Passion. For a generous man does not feel pain so much as dishonour; and of all outrages what could be greater than to compare Him with such a man, and then to esteem Him as even less than he? But our Saviour underwent this for our example and consolation when we are wronged, and to teach us to despise the judgments of men when, with a good conscience and pure intention, we desire and endeavour to please God only. For here we see the Saint of Saints not only looked upon as a malefactor amongst malefactors, as says Isaias[15]—*Et cum sceleratis reputatus est*—but regarded more vile and more unworthy of life than them all[16]—*Despectum et novissimum virorum.* This was the great crime laid to their charge by St. Peter, when he said to them[17]—'You are they who disowned and denied the Holy One and the Just, and required from the judge to give you as a favour a traitorous man and a murderer, and to condemn to death the Author of life.' It is certain that this petition of the Jews turned out to their own hurt, because, having preferred a robber to our Saviour, and a homicide to the Author of life, most justly they were punished by the loss of the life and peace and prosperity of their commonwealth, and were subjected to robberies and seditions to such a degree that at last their kingdom and city perished miserably.

Pilate, then, seeing the obstinacy and hardness of the people and having heard the answer which they had given at the instigation of the Chief Priests, which was so contrary to his expectation,[18] spoke to them again in favour of our Saviour, wishing, if it were possible, to set Him at liberty with the good pleasure and satisfaction of them all, and said to them[19]—'What shall I do, then, with Jesus, Who is called Christ and King of the Jews?'[20] He put this question to them in order

[14] St. John xviii. 40 [15] Iiii. 12 [16] *Ibid.* 3 [17] Acts iii. 14.
[18] St. Luke xxiii. 20. [19] St. Matt. xxvii. 22. [20] St. Mark xv. 14.

to fill them with shame and confusion at the answer they had given, by showing them that if they had had to choose as they liked in other years, it would not have been so bad to have chosen and begged for a seditious man, but when the comparison lay between two, to free the one was the same thing as to condemn the other. As though he had said—'If you ask for Barabbas, then what do you desire should be done with Jesus Christ, Who calls Himself King of the Jews? for merely on account of His title you ought to claim that He should have some honourable dismissal.'

But they, who were now heart and soul in their design, and thought very little of the inconvenience thus suggested, desiring nothing but our Lord's condemnation, did not answer as they might have answered, asking for Barabbas and leaving the cause of Jesus Christ to the will and right of the judge, but with great recklessness and shamelessness, when Pilate asked, 'What shall be done with Jesus?' they all cried out with one voice,[21] 'Crucify Him, let Him be placed on a cross; crucify Him, crucify Him!' Then Pilate, seeing that they had cast aside all concealment, and lost all regard for good, said to them the third time, with great earnestness,[22] 'Why, what evil hath this innocent Man done that I should crucify Him? I find no cause of death in Him. What I shall do, therefore, will be to give Him some easier and lighter punishment, and to let Him go.'

In proportion as the judge spoke with greater energy in favour of our Saviour, so much the more they became enraged, and shouted out like men in a fury, and begged most urgently, and violently insisted that He should be crucified.[23] And their voices prevailed and overcame the good intentions and the authority of the Governor.

[21] St. Mark xv. 13. [22] St. Luke xxiii. 22. [23] *Ibid.* 23.

CHAPTER XXI.

Pilate commands our Saviour to be scourged.

THE offer made by Pilate to the Jewish people was of no insignificant kind, because in addition to the blows, the spitting and buffeting, which our Lord had received in the house of Caiaphas, and the mockery and scorn with which He had been treated by Herod and his Court,[1] he had now promised to chastise and punish Him by scourging. This penalty was not only painful but infamous, and it properly belonged to slaves,[2] so that it could not be given to a Roman citizen. For the purpose intended by the Jews, and the hatred which they had conceived against our Lord because of His having aimed at dominion and wished to make Himself their King, it seemed to the Governor a very sufficient chastisement, and that He would be so humiliated and disgraced by it, as not only never again to think of a kingdom, but to be for ever ashamed and dishonoured among men. But as he saw that neither the people, nor the Chief Priests who were instigating them, were willing to agree to his proposal when he made it to them in words, he determined to carry it out in deed, supposing and considering it certain that when they had seen Him scourged they would change their mind.

With this intention, and shrinking back from the cries uttered by the people, he retired with our Saviour into the prætorium, complaining perchance of the obstinacy and nature of the people in forcing him to do what he did not wish to do. 'Thou hast seen,' he would say to our Saviour, 'the fury and disturbance of the people, and the means I have used to release Thee. I see clearly that the whole tempest which has been

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 22. [2] Acts xxii. 25.

raised against Thee is owing to nothing but malice and hatred, but who can restrain a furious people and make them listen to reason? It is time that Thou shouldst suffer some evil in order to escape greater. If I were at all risks to defend Thee, I should ruin myself and perhaps the whole province; and if Thou wert to seek to escape outrage altogether, Thou mightest then lose even Thy life. There is only one means whereby all may be assured: it is that in a case so urgent Thou shouldst bear with patience some chastisement by which Thy enemies may be appeased, and I be set free from their pressure, and Thou have Thy life preserved. So it is necessary Thou shouldst prepare Thyself for being scourged.' What answer did our Saviour make to this, except by silence and humility, by His deportment and whole bearing, to say what had been written of Him,[3] *Quoniam ego in flagella paratus sum*—'For I am ready for the scourge'?

This passage of the scourging at the pillar is one of the most remarkable and most fruitful in devotion in the Passion of our Lord, since there was united in it the greatest measure of dishonour with so much of suffering and such great outpouring of blood, not from one wound or two, but from many distributed over the whole of His body, for so our Saviour chose to be wounded, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, to heal the wounds of His mystical Body. As Isaias says[4]—'There was no soundness in Him from the sole of the feet unto the highest part of the head.' Our Saviour, moreover, desired to correct and chastise in His flesh the evil inclinations and excesses of our flesh, to condemn the exaggerated daintiness with which we treat it, and to do penance for the sensual and impure pleasures of men. These being so many and so evil as they are, it is easy to see how cruel and rigorous must have been the scourging which was to vent itself on our Saviour's shoulders as their penalty. This perhaps was the cause why, whenever our Saviour spoke of the Passion to His disciples, He always made[5] particular mention of the scourging, and

[3] Psalm xxxvii. 18. [4] i. 6.

[5] St. Matt. xx. 19; St. Mark x. 34; St. Luke xviii. 32.

dwelt especially upon it, as if He wished continually to place before His eyes this outrage and this suffering.

Our Saviour, then, being delivered by the Governor into the power of the lictors and executioners, who were to scourge Him, they led Him from the presence of the judge, and there, in the prætorium itself, which was a public and open place set apart for the chastisement and torture of malefactors, they commanded Him to take off His clothes, addressing Him with many rude speeches, and threatening Him with the scourges with which they would shortly scourge Him. Our Lord was so meek and humble that, as St. Peter says,[6] in order to set before us an example for our imitation, when He was reviled He did not revile again, and when He suffered He threatened not vengeance, but obeyed and was subject to him who judged Him and condemned Him unjustly. Therefore, at the command of these executioners He began to divest Himself of His raiment and to prepare Himself to receive so great an outrage, and to suffer such exquisite torment. Or, perchance, He permitted Himself to be unclothed by them, in order that the thing itself and the manner of it might be more extremely bitter and rude, and the insult greater; or, perhaps, He began with humility to unclothe Himself, and they rudely finished the work until they left Him entirely naked.

That virginal Body then remained disclosed to view, the Ark of the Testament was unveiled to the eyes of profane men, and that modest and most bashful Youth put to shame, and He, Who was beautiful above all the sons of men, suffered the confusion of that nakedness which our fault had merited, that He might merit for us the garments of grace, and the robe of immortality which He will give to us in glory. That pure flesh was uncovered which was conceived without sin by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and which the Son of God had united to Himself in order through it to do honour to the whole nature of man, and to teach us by its means how to honour God, and to offer in it a sacrifice acceptable and without stain to His Eternal Father. Finally, there stood exposed to sight

[6] 1 Epist. ii. 21.

that beloved and desired Spouse of chaste and pure souls, Whose beauty renders men chaste, and Whose majesty moves the angels of heaven to reverence, of Whom the whole Church can with truth say that which Michol, the spouse of David, said scoffingly to her husband[7]—'How glorious was the King of Israel to-day, uncovering Himself before the handmaids of His servants, and was naked as mean and wretched men are made naked!'

But those ministers of Satan, to whom in that hour had been given power over our Lord, naked and bare themselves of all humanity and sense of shame, bound our Saviour, naked as He was, to a pillar of stone. And doubtless the bonds with which He was bound were very strong and secure on account of the false notions and imaginations of the Jews, who, because they had seen Him perform so many miracles, were afraid of His power now unless the bonds were very strong, and also because of the cruelty with which the executioners intended to scourge Him, and which would be so great that they feared He might break from the place. O blind men! wherefore do you bind the Omnipotent, since He will remain quiet? Wherefore do you bind the hands in Whose power are your own, since He will not move them, seeing that He desires and is content to suffer? O charity, how powerful are thy bonds, seeing that God Himself could be bound with them; and if the bonds and chains of love failed, what others would have been sufficient to bind the Son of God to a pillar? Ah, if the night before St. Peter shivered with cold, with all his clothes on, what must our Saviour have felt standing naked and bound to a marble pillar, having had no sleep and having all His strength worn out by the treatment He had received during that past night?

Our Saviour, then, being thus bound, the executioners began to scourge that most delicate Body, either with rods, according to the custom of the Romans, or with thongs and scourges of leather, according to that of the Jews, or with both one and the other. And the scourgers (who according to some writers were six) succeeded one another, and let loose their

[7] 2 Kings vi. 20.

frenzy and accursed fury on the most sacred flesh and ineffable patience of the Son of God: a spectacle the most horrid the world has ever seen. For men were scourging the Son of God in the sight of the Eternal Father and of all the angels of heaven, and yet there was no one to hinder them. Draw near, all mankind, and enter the prætorium of Pilate and behold God Himself scourged for your sins! Learn, O man, what thou art worth, since thou wert bought at such a price, and how much thou owest to Him Who so liberally paid it for thee, and, if thou understandest how to estimate the value and dignity of thy redemption, be ashamed to make thyself again the slave of sin!

As to the number of strokes which our Lord received, who shall count them, for some say that they were more than five thousand? It was, however, impossible that the strokes could be few, seeing that they were inflicted for the chastisement of the sins, so many and so great, which men commit. Thus Isaias says,[8] that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all, that He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins, and that the chastisement which our sins merit was laid upon His shoulders. Moreover, the Law commanded,[9] that according to the measure of the crime the measure of the stripes should be. But what measure could there be to His scourging, since our sins were altogether without measure? Therefore, the holy prophets so long before had said that He remained without form or comeliness, and that His Body was as that of a leper, and that from the sole of His foot to the highest part of His head there was no soundness in Him.

If the feelings of the prophets were so deep who beheld Him afar off, what must His most holy Mother have felt, who stood so near Him? For very shortly news must have reached her of the resolution taken by Pilate, and how he had condemned her Son to be scourged, and at these most afflicting tidings were renewed her own tears and the tears of those holy women who bore her company. For if mothers are very deeply wounded when their sons and husbands are subjected to

[8] liii. 5, 6. [9] Deut. xxv. 2.

outrage, what must the heart of the Virgin have felt when she knew that her Son was about to be subjected to this outrage and suffering? It may be that in such a strait she could not restrain herself from approaching nearer to the prætorium, whence she saw, or at least heard, the strokes of the scourges, which would sound loudly in her ears, and would deeply pierce her heart, and draw as many tears from her eyes as drops of blood from the body of her Son.

In the *Revelations of St. Bridget*[10] it is written that the most Blessed Virgin spoke to the Saint in this manner—'At the time of the Passion of my Son, His enemies seized Him, striking Him on the neck and the cheeks, and when they had led Him to the pillar, He Himself took off His garments, and placed His hands on the column, and His enemies bound Him to it. At the first stroke, I, who was present there, fell down as dead, and coming once more to myself, I beheld His Body scourged to the bones, so that the very ribs were discovered, and what was sadder and more heartbreaking than all, as the scourges were withdrawn, they dragged the flesh off with them. And as my Son stood there all bleeding and lacerated, so that on Him there was no sound place, nor any part which they could scourge, then one of those who stood by angrily asked—"Do you wish to kill this Man before He be sentenced?" And saying this he immediately cut His bonds asunder.'

This is what is written in that book, and it cannot be doubted that the Blessed Virgin alone, through her sublime gift of contemplation, knew how to acknowledge and estimate the love which the Eternal Father felt for the world, in that He would not pardon His own son, but delivered Him to be scourged for its redemption and salvation, and the obedience and charity with which her Son offered Himself up; and that she likewise offered Him, as a thing so entirely her own, with profound reverence and burning charity, for her salvation and that of all men, desiring greatly that all should know, value, and esteem this ineffable benefit.

[10] Lib. i. 10.

But what man is so blind as not to know this, or what heart so hard as not to be penetrated by it, and to surrender itself up at the feet of our Lord? For, if a thief had been taken and put into prison and condemned for his theft to be scourged, and if an honoured and innocent man were to come forth to be his surety, and, in order that the thief might be set free, should enter the prison in his place, what compassion would he not excite in every one, if all his property were sold to pay for the thefts which he had not committed? and much more if his person were outraged and scourged publicly for a crime which he had not done? If the thief really had the feelings of a man, the outrage inflicted on him who was his surety would make his face glow, and the scourge which was laid on the shoulders of the other he would feel in his own heart, and with tears and cries he would go and declare that he was the delinquent and merited the chastisement, and that he who suffered it was without blame and innocent. Well then, hard and ungrateful heart, thou knowest the crimes thou hast committed against God, and thou seest the Holy of Holies and fountain of all sanctity cruelly scourged, only because He made Himself thy surety—what must thou not feel? What must be thy shame and confusion? What thy songs of praise and thanksgiving? How canst thou do otherwise than give up thyself as His slave, and bind thyself to obey Him for ever, when, bound to a column and covered with wounds, thou hearest Him saying,[11] *Quæ non rapui tunc exsolvebam. Et fui flagellatis tota die, et castigatio mea in matutinis*[12]—'Then did I pay that which I took not away,' and, 'I have been scourged all the day, and My chastisement has been in the morning.[13]

And if it be true that no penalty is inflicted on the debtor when his surety has paid the debt, what great confidence ought we to have that the Divine justice has nothing to demand at our hands, since it is satisfied with the payment made by Jesus Christ, if we are willing to avail ourselves of it and profit by it! The redemption has been made so copious that, although

[11] Psalm lxviii. 5. [12] *Ibid.* lxxii. 14.
[13] M. Avila, *Audi filia*, c. 19.

for God to pardon all the offences committed against Him by man, would be indeed a benefit above all human understanding; still the payment made by Jesus Christ our Lord exceeds in value the debt incurred by man, by much more than the highest heaven is above the deepest abyss. Sinful man merits to be scourged, to be made prisoner, and reviled and put to death, but is not his debt well paid by the scourgings and insults, by the torments and death of a Man Who is not only just, but Who is both Man and God? He chose to receive in His holy and innocent Body the penances due to the disorders of our bodies, to correct in His flesh the rebellion of our flesh, and at the cost of His sufferings to make it subject and obedient, and to set us an example how we are to chastise it, that it may serve the spirit, and not be subject unto sin in its works. And He, Who was beautiful above the sons of men, desired to be without grace or beauty, and to be made one immense wound, as a leper, in order to make our souls beautiful and acceptable in His eyes,[14] *Et ut exhiberet ipse sibi gloriosam ecclesiam, non habentem maculam aut rugam aut aliquid hujusmodi, sed ut sit sancta et immaculata*—'that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.'

[14] Ephes. v. 27.

CHAPTER XXII.

Our Saviour is mocked by the Gentile soldiers.

Thus the soldiers scourged our Saviour, and Pilate dissembled as though he had neither seen nor heard what was taking place. And perhaps he went meanwhile out of the prætorium, because that iniquitous judge did not intend so much to chastise the crimes of the accused, as to satisfy the passions of the accusers by this punishment. So great, however, was their malice, that we may well suppose that they paid and bribed the executioners to scourge our Lord in such a manner, that if Pilate (as he had told them) would not crucify Him, He should at any rate be reduced to such a state by the scourging as not to be able to live. So through the dissimulation of the judge and the fury of the accusers, the executioners passed all limits of justice and humanity, and hardly had they unbound Him from the pillar, and scarcely had our Saviour covered His wounds and nakedness with His garments, when they inflicted upon Him fresh kinds of mockery and scorn. We cannot be certain, from what the Evangelist says, whether these inventions proceeded from their own heads—the soldiers, through vanity, being inclined to such-like jests—or whether they were instigated by the Jews, who availed themselves of every opportunity of executing their damnable purpose, or, again, whether they so behaved by licence and permission of the Governor, or perhaps were commanded by him, in his desire to find ways of punishing our Saviour so as to satisfy the Jews, so that they might desist from requiring that He should die the death of the cross.

Pilate had formed it is impossible to say what idea of the Kingdom of Christ, partly from the accusation of the priests,

partly from the answers given him by our Saviour Himself, and partly also from the solemnity with which, a few days before, our Saviour had entered into Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of all the people who proclaimed Him to be King. From this he gathered that the Kingdom of the Messias was not of this world, but a mysterious thing, which he neither understood nor believed, that the Man before him had claimed to seize that dignity for Himself, and that the Jews did not wish to admit His claim. Although he found no cause of death in Him, yet he might well persuade himself that it was possible that our Saviour had committed some excesses in the commotion and tumult which He had occasioned among the people. At all events it seems that he agreed with Herod in regarding Him as a fool, for having attempted by such means to raise Himself to the throne. For these reasons it is probable that Pilate deemed it well to chastise Him for His transgression, and to cause the soldiers to mock Him as a fool in this same matter of the Kingdom in which He had been foolish, and that he thought the Jews would then be satisfied without endeavouring to put Him to death, being secure that after such a scourging there would be nothing of the King left in Him, nor even of any attempt to become a King. Thus the soldiers were encouraged to look upon this amusement of theirs as very appropriate, and to add new insults and inflict new sufferings on His wounds which were still fresh after the scourging, so that there should be accomplished what had been written of Him,[1] *Et super dolorem vulnerum meorum addiderunt*—'And they added to the pain of My wounds.' These inventions were so new, so cruel, and so ignominious, that they could have been invented by no one except the devil himself, who had taken possession of those ministers, in order by their means to irritate, if he could, the patience of our Lord. And no one would have been able to imagine or believe them, if the Evangelists had not described them so particularly.

For first, they were not content that ten or twelve Gentile soldiers should be present at the spectacle, but, passing the

[1] Psalm lxviii. 27.

word one to another, they assembled the whole cohort, as St. Mark and St. Matthew write (which must have amounted to at least a hundred and twenty-five soldiers). *Et convocant totam cohortem*, says St. Mark[2] and St. Matthew,[3] *Congregaverunt ad eum universam cohortem.* It is certain that they were collected together for no other purpose than for their amusement, and to see a sort of play about a burlesque and pretended King, or like men who are going to entertain themselves, as a pastime, with a fool, or something else ridiculous and amusing of the same sort.

Secondly, they stripped Him of His clothes, as St. Matthew says,[4]—*Et exuentes eum*—and it was no little cruelty, when He had covered Himself with His garments, after so many wounds and so much shedding of blood, to make Him take them off again ; nor was it a small insult for an honourable Man to have to appear naked and scourged before so great a number of soldiers.

Thirdly, they clothed Him with a cloak of scarlet or purple, or, to speak more correctly, they wrapped Him in an old rag which had once been a cloak, or garment, of scarlet. This appears to be signified in what St. Matthew says, *Chlamydem coccineam circumdederunt ei.* St. John[5] makes use of the same expression, *Et veste purpurea circumdederunt eum*, because in this way, by the colour of the garment (which was purple) and the fashion of it (which was a cloak, the military dress of the Emperors), they signified that this Man had desired to make Himself King ; and the purple vestment being old, torn, and faded, and thrown over Him unbecomingly and wound around Him they signified thus that all His pretensions had been nothing more than absurdity and folly.

Fourthly, like to the purple garment was also His crown. It was made of sharp reeds woven together,[6] or of briars and thorns, as strong and sharp as we see them at the present day in divers churches, where they are kept with the greatest reverence. This crown was woven by the soldiers with great

[2] xv. 16. [3] xxvii. 27. [4] *Ibid.* 28. [5] xix. 2.
[6] St. Matt. xxvii. 29.

care, using instruments that they might not hurt their hands. They wove it either in the form of a wreath, as it is ordinarily painted, or, as many think, in the shape of a helmet or casque, which covered all His head. Having thus plaited it, they raised it up and settled it on His head, hammering it down with great force and no less cruelty, insulting Him with this crown, as being a pretended King, and wounding Him with the thorns, with very acute pain. In this manner our Saviour desired that for His friends and faithful followers suffering and insult should be as two jewels of inestimable price, which in His Kingdom He had fastened to His Crown.

Fifthly, they put in His right hand a reed instead of a sceptre, as St. Matthew says,[7] *Et arundinem in dextera ejus*—'A reed in His right hand.' And by this they meant to characterize Him as empty headed, as a false vain and unstable Man, like a reed; they also signified thereby that His Kingdom was pure nonsense, without any substance or stability.

Sixthly, after having invested Him with these insignia and appearances of a mock king, they began to make game of Him with jests and nicknames and laughter, and amongst other jests they bowed their knees before Him, wishing Him joy of His kingdom, and saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews,' as says St. Mark,[8] *Et ponentes genua, adorabant eum;* and St. Matthew, *Et genu flexo ante eum, illudebant ei, dicentes: Ave Rex Judæorum.*

Seventhly, they spat in His face, which is a sign of the most supreme contempt, so that He became all disfigured and like a leper, marked with blows, besmeared with their filthy spittle, which was mingled with the precious blood that dropped from His head. This outrage and insult of their spitting in His face, had been so present to the eyes of our Saviour that He made particular and express mention of it when, going up to Jerusalem, He gave an account of His Passion to His disciples; for He spoke to them thus in St. Mark,[9] *Et illudent ei, et conspuent eum*, in St. Luke,[10] *Tradetur enim gentibus, et illudetur, et flagellabitur, et conspuetur.*

[7] St. Matt. xxvii. 19. [8] xv. 19. [9] x. 34. [10] xviii. 32.

Eighthly, they gave Him many buffets on the face, which are particularly noted by the Evangelist St. John, when he says, *Et veniebant ad eum, et dicebant: Ave Rex Judæorum:*[11] *et dabant ei alapas.* Thus, going one after the other to salute Him and bend their knees, pretending that they wanted to kiss His hand as being a King, they raised their own and gave Him blows with their open palms.

Ninthly, others came, and offering Him the like homage, took the reed out of His hand and gave Him blows with it upon the head, insulting Him with the blows of this hollow cane, and wounding Him with the sharp thorns which they drove further into His head. St. Matthew speaks of this,[12] *Acceperunt arundinem et percutiebant caput ejus;* and St. Mark,[13] *Et percutiebant caput ejus arundine.*

The soldiers selected for the scene of this representation the prætorium of the Governor, as St. Matthew says,[14] and not any out of the way part of it, but the hall itself, as St. Mark particularly declares, *Milites autem duxerunt eum in atrium prætorii.*[15] The soldiers led Him into the hall of the prætorium, which must have been some large and spacious court, as was requisite for the numbers of people who were accustomed to assemble there, in front of the prætorium or tribunal where audience was given. Hither they dragged our Saviour, stripped Him rudely of His garments, and placed Him on some low and mean seat, so that they could carry on their jest and amuse themselves more conveniently. There they first brought the purple robe, which was a large cloak or cape, open in front, fastened at the breast by a buckle or hook, and this as we have already said, was the robe proper to kings, and the Emperors were accustomed to send such vestments to their friends as a mark of honour. This cloak the soldiers put upon Him, and whilst putting it on they doubtless exclaimed—'This purple, Lord King, the Emperor sends to Thee from Rome, because Thou art worthy of it;' then spitting at Him in the face and giving Him blows, they left Him with it round Him all disordered, His naked body being here and there exposed to view. Then

[11] xix. 3. [12] xxvii. 30. [13] xv. 19. [14] xxvii. 27. [15] xv. 16.

others came with the sceptre of reed, and placed it in His hand, saying—'Take this reed in Thy hand, for such is as Thy kingdom, such is its sceptre, the one as hollow as the other. And now hold Your head right,' and then on His head they placed the crown of thorns, pressing it down violently. 'Since Thou art about to die for being King, it is not meet that Thou shouldst die without a crown, nevertheless it will be as wretched a crown as is fitting for one Who has been condemned for making Himself King, these therefore are the thorns which Thou hast sown for Thyself by Thy vain pretensions.' So saying, they gave Him blows upon the head, inflicting on Him by all this great dishonour and contempt, and also causing Him at the same time the most intense suffering. With such a crown as that upon His head the blood began to drop and trickle through His hair upon His neck, down His brow, and over His most sacred face; and then the light of His eyes was obscured, and that head fallen and humiliated which is chief of men and angels, in order that through His humiliation we who had fallen should raise our heads and say to the Lord,[16] *Tu autem Domine susceptor meus es, gloria mea, et exaltans caput meum*—'Thou, O Lord, art my helper, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.'

Our Saviour being thus arrayed by the soldiers with such a sceptre and such purple and such a crown, they began to sport and to entertain themselves with Him, mocking at His Kingdom as being that of a madman and a fool, bowing the knee, and offering Him marks of courtesy and homage with shouts of laughter; giving Him blows on the face and striking Him on the head, and saying to Him—'May God save Thee, King of the Jews!' deriding Him because He had pretended to be King and had fallen into so miserable a state. Very similar to these wretched soldiers are hypocrites, who, honouring God with their lips and by exterior ceremonies, are far from Him in their hearts, and by their works dishonour and offend Him, as did these hypocritical worshippers of the Lord, who, bending the knee to do Him

[16] Psalm iii. 4

reverence, raised their hands to deal Him blows. Who is there who could complain of offences or contempt, seeing what our Saviour suffered in His own Person?

Let us, however, take our eyes off these unjust and cruel men, and let us turn them to our Lord Who is suffering, seeing that there is so much to gaze upon in Him Who remained so firm and constant in such heavy straits, even as Isaias had prophesied of Him,[17] giving His body to the strikers and His cheeks to the buffeters and mockers, not turning His face from those who reviled Him and who spat upon Him. More powerful to suffer all that evil than His bold and cruel enemies to inflict it, He remained seated with the utmost calmness, dignity, serenity, and majesty, receiving these insignia of scorn as though they were really crowning Him King, and accepting their insults with as much pleasure as though they were in truth courtesies. Never was there Emperor who invested himself with the purple, or took the crown and the sceptre in his hand at his coronation with so great gladness of heart, as our Saviour felt when He put on His body and adorned Himself with that ragged purple robe, accepted the crown of thorns, and received in His hands the reed, desiring that, in that His day of honour and coronation, all the world, if it were possible, should be present. For those hundred soldiers of the cohort seemed few to Him Who, so many years before, had been so early to invite the souls of all men for that day.[18] *Egredimini, et videte, filiæ Sion, regem Salomonem in diademate, quo coronavit illum mater sua in die desponsationis illius, et in die lætitiæ cordis ejus*—'Come forth, ye daughters of Sion,' He says, 'and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart.' As this King was to be[19] magnified in holiness more than in worldly pomp, as His Kingdom was not of this world, it was meet that neither should the ceremonies of His consecration be worldly, and so those now performed were the fittest that could be, and those which His Eternal Father had determined on that

[17] l. 6. [18] Cant. iii. 11. [19] Exodus xv 11.

He might work the exaltation of His beloved and obedient Son.

It was meet that the purple should be old and faded, and should cling to His recent wounds and be stained afresh with His blood, inasmuch as the purple with which He was to be vested and adorned, and which was to represent the glory of His Kingdom, was His faithful servants, as is written in Isaias.[20] 'As I live,' saith the Lord, 'thou shalt be clothed with all these as with an ornament, and as a bride thou shalt put them about thee.' The Lord will make all those who are to be His purple garment and vestment well worn themselves, and faded through the decay of the old man, and putting them on His wounds He will give them new colour and beauty, and will renew them and make them beautiful and bright, because they have been freed from all their stains[21] and have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. And thus our Lord will come to be the King of Kings, for all His servants will be clothed in purple, dyed in His most precious Blood.

His crown also was made of thorns, nor could it be otherwise, nor was there anything else in the world of which it could be made, because whatever flourishes on earth or is of any delight and glory, quickly fades away, and what abides are troubles, which pierce and wound like thorns. Of these thorns there is an abundant harvest in this valley of tears and country of malediction, and of these our true King and legitimate Sovereign made Himself partaker, that He might set us free from them, and those thorns which we have deserved fall upon His head. But these afflictions, which in us were the chastisement of sins, were in Him the meriting of eternal glory, and the thorns torn up from us and transplanted to the blessed and royal head of our Lord, and there watered with His precious Blood, brought forth the flowers of immortality, and gained for us a crown that will never fade. The Lord, moreover, willed that His crown should be of thorns, because His Kingdom was to be firm and perpetual; and it was therefore necessary His crown should be such that it could be fixed and fastened

[20] xlix. 18. [21] Apoc. xxii. 14.

on His head in order to denote that no accident can make it fall off, and that no force can take it away.

His sceptre was a reed, and so it ought to have been for the signification conveyed by it, although the effects which it produced were as great as though it had been made of iron, according to what is written :[22] *Reges eos in virga ferrea, et tanquam vas figuli confringes eos*—'Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' For He had to overcome provinces and kingdoms, and to tame the people, and humiliate His enemies, breaking and crushing them like earthern vessels, and making Himself Lord over them, according to what David himself says in another Psalm,[23] *Virgam virtutis tuæ emittet Dominus ex Sion ; dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum*—'The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion, that thou mayest conquer all the world, and be lord over thine enemies.' For from Sion the Apostles went forth and subdued the whole world by their word, and made it subject to the Kingdom of Christ ; because their strength and virtue was that which had descended upon them from on high, they themselves being poor, ignorant, and weak men. But our Lord desired to subject and tame the whole power of the world, and bring it under authority with this weak reed, for the greater glory of His holy name. Therefore, one of the Apostles themselves said[24] that 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men ;' that is to say, that a reed placed in the hands of God is more powerful than all. And this weakness of God, says St. Athanasius,[25] was the Apostles, who, being ignorant men and unlettered, penetrated in a very short time throughout the whole world, and made subject its rulers and learned men, kings and powerful princes, and the sceptre of the power of God went forth from Sion to subdue His enemies. And, moreover, not only the Apostles who preached, but the faithful also who were converted, were the meekest and most abject of men who were in the world. And so the same Apostle says[26]—

[22] Psalm ii. 9. [23] cix. 2. [24] 1 Cor. i. 25.
[25] Lib. Quest. *ad Antioch*, q. 129. [26] 1 Cor. i. 26.

'Behold, brethren, those have been called to the faith, and you will find that amongst you there are not many wise, nor many powerful, nor many noble, but that rather God has used the most ignorant in order to confound and put to shame the wise, and the weak of the world to confound the powerful, and the vile and despised, who have no reputation, no being, in the eyes of men, that He might destroy and bring to nought those who are something and who shine in the world.' And if, as the Apostle says here, God wills to confound the wise by means of the ignorant, and by the weak to ruin the powerful, and through the vile and contemptible to bring down those who shine and who hold the highest place, truly, then, with a weak reed God chooses to strive with the world, that no flesh may glory in His presence, nor attribute to its own strength the effects which flow from the strength of God. For this cause also the Lord willed that the sceptre of His Kingdom should be a reed, so that the marvels which were to be done therewith might not be attributed to the weak reed, but to the arm of God which held it.

All the other ceremonies that took place in this coronation of outrages inflicted upon our Saviour by word or deed were necessary to the stability of His Kingdom, which is founded in patience, in contempt of worldly honour, and a true renunciation of all things. So that by this were instructed the holy confessors and martyrs, and all those who are of the Kingdom of Christ, and were taught patience and the endurance of all adverse things; and thus the Kingdom which is not of this world began to conquer and triumph over the world, not by resisting, but by suffering, not with pride and bravery, but with humility and simplicity.

And that a coronation so solemn, and of so great a King, should not remain hidden in the prætorium and be confined to the sight of a few soldiers, God so ordered it that the Governor himself should lead our Saviour by the hand, just as He was, to a public place where all the people could see Him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Pilate brings our Saviour forth to the people, and they demand that He should be crucified.

The place where Christ our Lord was crowned was, as we have said, the hall of the prætorium, which was a spacious court in front of the palace of the Governor, where was generally stationed the guard, and that cohort or company of the Roman soldiers which formed a portion of the garrison which the Republic maintained in Jerusalem. In this court there was a great gate, by which the Governor came out from his house into the prætorium, which was a wide and spacious hall, where he heard causes and pronounced sentence. In this hall there was also a door, which opened out upon a gallery raised some steps above the open court, in which were gathered together the Priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the whole multitude of people, who from their scruples about the Pasch would not enter the prætorium. They were partly rejoicing to hear of the ill-treatment which our Saviour was receiving at the hands of the soldiers, partly complaining that the conclusion of the cause and the sentence of death was so long delayed.

Pilate now came forth from his house to the prætorium, desirous to find some means of moderating the hatred and calming the passions of the Jews. At his presence that cruel game in which the soldiers were indulging ceased, and they dispersed, some to one side and some to the other, leaving Jesus in the midst of the court, where the Governor could see Him well, and be moved to compassion. Then, taking it for granted that the sight of Him would cause the same pity in the hearts of the Jews which it had caused in his, he bade Him follow him, and he led Him through the door of the

prætorium to the balcony which looked down upon the court, and in sight of all the people. Our Lord came forth then, following the Governor, divested of His garments, cruelly scourged, His most sacred Body flayed and wounded in many parts, and, where it was not lacerated, scored with the lashes and cords, and having nothing on His flesh but the old rag of a cloak which the soldiers had thrown over Him.[1] The crown of thorns was on His head, and it is believed, although the Evangelist does not say so, that His hands were bound like a criminal, and that He held within them the reed, which, as well as the crown, served the purpose of dishonouring Him, and making game of Him as a false king. His eyes were filled with tears, that flowed down from them and mingled with the blood trickling from His head; His cheeks were pale, stained with blood, and smeared with the spittle they had vomited in His face; His legs trembled, as much from cold as from weakness, and His whole Body was bowed down and bent beneath the weight of insult and suffering.

Pilate, keeping by his side this most pitiable figure, enough to move even wild beasts to compassion and to soften the most flinty heart, caused silence to be proclaimed, and then said in a loud voice[2]—'Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I have found no cause in Him.' As if to say, 'I have had no other reason for bringing Him to this pass in which He is except to yield somewhat to your petition, to oblige you in some degree to yield to mine to leave Him His life.' Then turning towards our Saviour, Who stood by him, and pointing to Him with his hand, he exclaimed[3]—'Behold the Man!' desiring by means of so sad a spectacle to move them to compassion, and at the same time to make them assured that it was impossible that such a Man should ever again attempt to make Himself King. This is the meaning contained in that word, *Ecce Homo.*

O iniquitous judge, if ever such were in the world, who, confessing now for the third time that, after having carefully examined into the matter, thou didst see no cause why this

[1] St. John xix. 5. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

Man should be chastised, hast nevertheless reduced Him to such a state of misery, that knowing the fury of His enemies, thou imaginest that merely to behold Him would move them to compassion! O angels of heaven, who were present at this spectacle, if you could but have been seen kneeling and prostrate, reverencing this holy Humanity and confessing that all your love was as ice compared with the burning flames of His charity! if you could but have been seen with your hands folded, confessing that it was His will and commandment only which kept them bound and prevented you from revenging His injuries! O people of the Jews, once the chosen and beloved of God, and now justly reprobated and rejected by Him, how is it that so much blindness has fallen upon your eyes, and such hardness on your hearts, and now that you have placed the cause in the hands of a profane and Gentile judge, wherefore do you not submit to his decision and agree to his sentence? You once closed your ears to the Voice of God, open them at least to the words of the Governor Pilate, who from that high place and in presence of our Saviour Himself, in order that he might put you to shame and move you to compassion, stood there and cried out, *Ecce Homo*—'Behold the Man! do you see what kind of Man you are accusing? This is He Whom you delivered up to me, and Whom perchance you cannot recognize after the rigorous chastisement which He has undergone; see what a Man for you to accomplish such great fury against; behold Him now, not decorated with empire, but disgraced with opprobrium; if you were envious of Him as King, pity Him now as miserable; be assured and persuaded that He will never again assume the name of a King, which has cost Him so dear. He is disgraced, scourged by justice, crowned with thorns, clothed in an old purple rag, dishonoured by every species of insult, outraged with a thousand inventions of injury, what more do you ask? You have obtained far more than you could have desired or asked, and I, through regard to you, have done much more than what I wished or intended. And as the penalty and ignominy inflicted upon Him have been so excessive, it is but reason that your hatred should

cease, that your anger should be moderated and your envy mitigated.'

Who would think that the authority of the Governor and the presence of our Saviour would not obtain from the people all that was asked of them? Nevertheless, it was just the reverse, for the High Priests and Ministers of the Synagogue, whose office it was to make the people listen to reason, were, on the contrary, those who excited and fed the fire of envy and hatred against our Saviour.[4] For, hearing what Pilate said, and understanding what he intended to do, forgetful of their own authority and of the clemency they ought to have shown by reason of their dignity and office, they began to lift up their voices in the middle of the court, which was filled with people, and to cry out, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.' As if to say, 'What has been done is well, but finish it thoroughly, for He well deserves to be put on the cross.'

This answer could not but seem very strange to Pilate. He had come himself in person out of the prætorium, and had set himself to reason with the people in so public a place, and he would not have taken so much pains, or risked his own authority, if he had not been persuaded that by means of the pitiable spectacle of our Saviour, and his own gentle and courteous reasoning, he should bring over the priests, and obtain from the people what he desired. But seeing their obstinacy, and astonished at their hardness, as well as enraged at their rudeness, angry, moreover, that his designs should fail and not turn out as he thought, he was filled with vexation and disdain, and like a man whose schemes had come to nought, and who was utterly at fault, he exclaimed, 'Take Him then, you,[5] and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him.' As though he had said, 'Do you think that I am to condemn an innocent man because of your cries and shoutings? Do you perchance desire to avenge your hatred by my hands, and to make of me the instrument wherewith to satisfy your envy? Not so shall it be, for I am the administrator of justice, and it is not for me to be the author of injustice and of oppression. I am a judge

[4] St. John xix. 6. [5] *Ibid.*

to punish the guilty, and not the executioner of the innocent. What I have done hitherto has not been to punish Him, but to free Him out of your hands, and because I hoped to find in you some spark of humanity if I yielded somewhat to your wishes. Now that you have shown yourselves so plainly, there is nothing to make me think of going further, for neither reason nor justice permits any one to be condemned without cause, and I have found none in this Man to justify what you ask, not even what has already been done to Him. If, however, you have found any, take Him and crucify Him, and let it be at your own risk and on your own account, that you may give an account to whoever will require it at your own hands for so unjust a homicide?

When the Chief Priests heard this answer of Pilate, they perceived immediately that these words, 'Take Him you and crucify Him,' were not so much a permission given to them to do it as a device whereby he might rid himself of the business, and avoid doing a thing so unjust, as well as to brand them as carried away by passion in asking it, and as daring and devoid of shame in having no hesitation about executing it. So, in order to show the Governor that they resented his words, and to trouble him by a new accusation, they said to him,[6] 'Yes, we have a law, and according to our law this Man ought to die, because He has made Himself the Son of God.' As if they had said, 'Thou, Pilate, hast affirmed many times that this Man is innocent, and that thou hast no wish and wilt not dare to crucify Him, but that we should crucify Him ourselves, as though we were men without a law and without God. But we have a law, and a law given by the true God, and if, according to your law you have found no cause in this Man, it is because you adore many gods, and you think that they have sons, and you do not deem it an evil thing that men should make themselves sons of God. But according to our holy law, which knows but one true God, this Man is guilty of death as a blasphemer, because He has made Himself the true Son of God.'

[6] St. John xix. 7.

O blind obstinacy and vain presumption of the Jews, who boasted and gloried in having received a law from the hand of God, and desired to show themselves very observant of it! But it has already been seen how they observed it; not entering into the prætorium during the Pasch, that they might not be contaminated, and being very zealous, even as our Lord had already reproved them,[7] in paying tithes of anise and of cummin, forgetting the weightier and more important matters of the law, judgment and mercy. For mercy was so foreign to their nature, that, although they were priests, they had none of it, whilst the judge, albeit he was a Gentile, felt it; and judgment was so far from them, that they committed a thousand wrongs in this process itself, confounding all justice, and changing their charge just as often as it was convenient, in order to suit their purpose. For, first they accused Him of making Himself King and preventing the people from paying tribute to Cæsar, and then, when they saw that the Governor could not discover any proofs of the crime or any substance in the accusation, they accused Him of another crime, which the Governor could less understand, and which would perplex him more—that He had sought to make Himself the Son of God. And to make the matter still more obscure, they cited their law, which he was not acquainted with nor was he under any obligation so to be, saying, 'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die.' What, however, were the laws which were alleged by these most sapient doctors and advocates of injustice and iniquity? What a law was this, which condemned to death whoever should call himself the Son of God? It could not be any other than that which was given against blasphemers, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus,[8] where God decrees that 'he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying he should die.' But this people regarded it as a great blasphemy that our Saviour should say He was God, or the Son of God, and therefore it was that when on one occasion they took up stones to stone Him,[9] Jesus said to them, 'Many good works I have showed you

[7] St. Matt. xxiii. 23. [8] xxiv. 16. [9] St. John x. 31.

from My Father; for which of these works do ye stone Me?' and the Jews answered, 'For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that Thou, being a Man, makest Thyself God.' Why then, blind and perverse people, if this were blasphemy, why do you now demand Him to be put to death? Why did you not stone Him then? How is it that you were so confounded by the few words He spoke in His own defence, that you were unable to utter a single word in reply? And the stones which you had in your hands then, and which you did not use, do you wish to cast them at Him now that He does not attempt to defend Himself, and that the Governor cannot understand your reasons? And if He was to die for this blasphemy, wherefore should He die on the cross, since the law only commands that He should be stoned? *Et qui blasphemaverit nomen Domini, morte moriatur, lapidibus opprimet eum omnis multitudo*[10]—'He who shall blaspheme the name of the Lord, dying he shall die, the whole multitude shall stone him.' You yourselves are testimonies, that for this self same cause (which you call blasphemy), you desired many times to stone Him.[11] What, pray then, is this which now impels you to deliver Him over to the secular arm, and so urgently to demand for Him the death of the cross? If it be not lawful for you, as you say,[12] to put any man to this kind of death, how is it that it is lawful for you to ask for it? And if the crime of which you accuse Him does not merit the penalty of death, except according to your own law, wherefore do you require any other kind of death than that which is commanded by your law? and the Romans having no law which condemns this blasphemy, why do ye ask that it be punished with this punishment, which the laws of the Romans alone inflict?

All these things show the blindness of that people, and how great was the passion and the pride with which they said, 'We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die, because He makes Himself the Son of God.' But just as Caiaphas, without knowing what he said, prophesied that our Saviour must die that all the people might not perish, so these

[10] Lev. xxiv. 16. [11] St. John x. 33. [12] *Ibid.* xviii. 31.

men also, without knowing what they said, gave utterance to a very great and mysterious truth. For first, it was true that their law was given them by God, and their prophecies revealed and dictated by God, and their sacrifices ordained by God. It was also true that our Saviour had preached many times that He was the Son of God, whereby He did injury to none,[13] nor seized that which was not His, since He was God, and the Son of God. He was likewise Man, and had become Man for our sakes, and was a just and holy Man, not having any taint of fault or sin. And being such, agreeably to all law, He ought to have lived and been honoured and worshipped by all; and it was only according to the law of the Jews that He ought to die, because so it was written in the law and prefigured in all the sacrifices, and prophesied by the prophets, and the whole of that law proclaimed nothing but that one thing, namely, that the Son of God made Man must die, and not by any common death, but by the death of the Cross, through obedience to His Father and for the salvation of the world. It was for this that our Saviour, speaking of His death, said,[14] 'That as Moses lifted up a serpent of brass on a pole in the desert, in order that by looking on it all might be healed who had been bitten by real serpents, so it was meet that the Son of the Virgin should be lifted on the Cross, that all who looked on Him in faith and with love might be saved.'

Let not Pilate, then, think that he made a spectacle of Christ in vain, although he could not move to compassion the Jews who were there, since so many have been healed since that time from the poisonous serpent wounds of their sins by looking on Him, and have beheld the sufferings of our Lord with such great compassion that they have been scourged and crowned with thorns, and crucified in their hearts with Him.

Let us all, then, behold this Man-God, Whom so many kings, so many patriarchs and prophets, desired to see. Let us behold the Man to listen to His words, since He is the Teacher Whom the Eternal Father has given us. Let us behold the Man, that we may imitate His life and walk in

[13] Philip. ii. 6. [14] St. John iii. 14.

His footsteps, for there is no other way by which we can be saved but through Him. Let us behold the Man, in order to compassionate Him, for the state in which we see Him is enough to move to pity even those who wish Him ill. Let us fix our eyes on the Man, in order to weep and do penance, since we, by our sins, have brought Him to be what He is. Let us behold the Man, for none who do not thus behold Him can escape eternal death; for He is the brazen serpent lifted up in the desert, that those who look upon Him may not perish. Let us gaze on the face of the Man, meditating always upon Him, and regulating our life by Him, that in Him, as in a looking-glass, we may see our defects which deform us, and knowing what these are, we may take the tears and the blood which flow down His beautiful face, and with sorrow wash our stains in them, and so shall we become pure and lovely in His divine sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Pilate examines our Saviour again, and endeavours to free Him from death.

The Chief Priests and ministers of the Jews hated our Saviour without a cause (according to what was written in their law), and therefore instead of being moved to compassion[1] when the judge brought Him before them, they became all the more angry and demanded the cross for Him, accusing Him of blasphemy because He had made Himself Son of God.[2] When Pilate heard these words he was filled with still greater fear, as the Evangelist says, although it had been no little fear which he had felt before up to this time from the moment that this affair had come into his hands, for it had always seemed to him very entangled and dangerous. Now, however, his fear was greatly increased by this new accusation, that Christ had made Himself the Son of God. For it must be borne in mind that the Chief Priests had hitherto been silent respecting this crime of calling Himself the Son of God, and had only urged that He had wished to make Himself King; this being a crime that touched the dignity of Cæsar, and because they imagined that it would be with Pilate as it usually is with many other judges, that he would be more zealous in punishing a wrong committed against his King than a crime against God. As to the accusation concerning the crime against Cæsar, Pilate had been very much afraid. For on the one hand he saw the innocence of our Saviour, Who had sinned in nothing, either against the Jews or against the Emperor. But, on the other hand, he saw the envy and fury of the people, who with so much pertinacity accused Him of a crime so hateful against the Imperial dignity and revenues,

[1] St. John xix. 6. [2] *Ibid.* 8.

that the mere mention of it laid him under the obligation, as a loyal subject, of making a great show of severity in the matter. So he was very much perplexed and did not know what course to take. For, if he condemned Him, besides that it was a criminal thing to condemn an innocent man through fear, any one, moreover, who wished him ill might require at his hand the death of so great a saint and so distinguished a prophet. And if he absolved Him, then the whole people and the Chief Priests and rulers might accuse him of setting free a traitor who desired to take possession of the throne, a thing of which it would be easy to persuade the Emperor. Seeing himself, then, in this anxiety, like a time-serving and weak-minded man in defence of the truth, he made use of such measures as human prudence had suggested to him. For he had first endeavoured to extricate himself from the business by remitting it to Herod, and afterwards he desired as much as he could to come to a compromise with the people; seeking out for some good way of making them of their own freewill desire to leave our Saviour with His life. He had, therefore, had resort to two measures. The first was to put Christ in competition with Barabbas, at the cost of His honour; and the second, scourging Him grievously and crowning Him with thorns, at the cost of intense pain to His body.

Neither of these two measures had been successful. Rather, working on these fears and human considerations of his, the priests accused our Lord anew of having made Himself the Son of God, and if Pilate had been afraid before he became much more so now, for the answer made by our Saviour came to his remembrance, that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that He had come into the world to give testimony of the truth. On the other hand, he had beheld so much dignity in His demeanour, so much prudence in His answers, and (what he marvelled at still more) so much constancy and fortitude in His silence, he had heard, moreover, the wonderful things which were told of Him, that it did not seem to him as though it were very unlikely to be true that he should be what He said He was. He was strengthened in some degree in this surmise through

the false opinions of the heathen, who were commonly persuaded that their gods had sons amongst men, and if these sons on the side of their mothers were mortal and passible, on the side of their fathers they had excellent virtues and performed heroic deeds. And as the miracles which were recounted of our Saviour were so many and so great, that it did not seem possible they could proceed from any but divine power, his opinion that perchance He was a son of God, was not removed because he saw that He was passible and mortal. On this Pilate began to be disturbed because he had scourged and made a jest of a man who might be a son of God, and much more to fear and be in doubt respecting what he was further to do, for he found himself placed between the chance of either absolving a blasphemer or crucifying a son of God, and both for one and the other he had good cause to fear the anger and punishment of heaven.

The matter seeming to him very serious and worthy of deep consideration, Pilate entered once more into his prætorium or audience chamber, thoughtful and full of fears and anxiety, and calling our Saviour apart, he asked Him,[3] 'Whence art Thou?' He did not ask concerning His country, for he already knew that He was a Galilean, but concerning His origin and nature, as though he had said, 'What is this about divinity of which Thy fellow-countrymen accuse Thee? Of what lineage art Thou? Who are Thy fathers? Dost Thou come from heaven or from some hidden and remote portion of the earth? Dost Thou derive Thy origin from any of the gods, or art Thou pure man?' All this was implied in that pregnant and anxious inquiry, 'Whence art Thou?'

Our Saviour, seeing that this inquiry sprang partly from Pilate's worldly fear of some punishment or temporal loss, partly from the error of the heathen who gave sons to their gods, and knowing also that this was not a fitting season to declare so sublime a truth as that of His eternal generation, and that Pilate was not in a disposition of mind to listen to it, and had not the capacity to understand or believe it, determined to be silent and not to answer a word, but to preserve His accustomed

[3] St. John xix. 9.

gravity and modesty, especially as the inquiry did not appear to Him to be necessary as regarded the cause which was in hand, Pilate having been already satisfied of His innocence, for the establishment of which it was sufficient for Him to have answered in general terms that His Kingdom was not of this world. If, then, He were King, and not of this world, it was easy to understand that His Kingdom was spiritual and divine, and such a kingdom is properly the Kingdom of God. It is true that our Lord had twice replied to the priests[4] as to the same question, affirming clearly that He was the Son of God, but He did this because the priests, by means of the light which they had received from the Scriptures, knew better what they asked, and were more bound to understand and believe it. But He did not wish to reply to the heathen Governor, because he neither knew what he was asking nor was he in a state to believe it, and His reply would only have served to increase the esteem he had conceived of Him, and the fear he was in of condemning Him. As little did He wish that any one should imagine that He desired to save Himself from death, by persuading a man who was a layman and a Gentile of what the Chief Priests and Scribes had looked upon as blasphemy. Thus was our Lord silent as to what was in defence of Himself and His honour, and spoke when it was necessary for the honour of God and the good of those who listened. Thus when He did not answer He was silent as a lamb, and when He replied He taught us as a Shepherd.

Pilate had expected that our Lord would give him some kindly and grateful answer, and some reason which would be a defence of Himself, and he was more astonished by His silence than perhaps he would have been by any reply whatever. For that in such a matter, and one so full of danger, a criminal should make no reply to his judge, and a judge who had defended him with so much energy and had taken so much trouble on his account, was a thing new and worthy of marvel. Nor, perhaps, could any words whatever have been used by means of which a man without faith could have been so con-

[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 64; St. Luke xxii. 70.

firmed in the opinion which he was conceiving about the Son of God, as he was now by this His silence. So, permitting Him to see that he was a little annoyed, and that he complained of the little account our Lord made of him, and at the same time intimating to Him with much goodwill the line He had better take to serve His own cause well, he said to Him[5]—'Why dost Thou not speak to me, since even if I were not Thy judge Thou oughtest to speak to me in return for the good offices I am doing Thee? Dost Thou not know that I have power to crucify Thee, and power also (if it seem good to me) to release Thee?' By these words Pilate condemned himself out of his own mouth, so that it availed him nothing that he washed his hands in order to lay the guilt of our Lord's death on the Jews, for although he was wanting in courage and determination, he himself confessed that he had power to release Him.

This speech was, nevertheless, arrogant and tyrannical, claiming the power to bestow life or to take it away. Because in legitimate judges their power must follow justice, and not go before it, and thus, although they have the power of releasing the innocent and condemning the guilty, they have it not to absolve the guilty and crucify the innocent, as did those two perverse judges to whom Daniel said[6]—'Thou who art grown old in evil days, how are thy sins come to fall on thee which thou hast committed before in proclaiming unjust judgments! oppressing the innocent and letting the guilty to go free, whereas the Lord said, the innocent and the just Thou shalt not kill.' These are those judges whose heads are affected by the strong wine of power, and who turn the law upside down so as not to judge in conformity with justice and reason, and who, blinded by their interests or ambition, know how to conduct a case in such a manner that it shall result in the guilty issuing as innocent, and the innocent as guilty. Therefore it was that the Prophet Isaias said[7]—'Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil. . . . Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine and stout men at drunkenness; that justify the wicked for gifts, and take away the justice of the just from him.'

[5] St. John xix. 10. [6] Dan. xiii. 52, 53. [7] v. 20, 22, 23.

And, in order to show that this abuse on the part of judges was greatly to the prejudice of the public weal and to the dishonour of God (from Whom all legitimate power is derived), our Lord, Who is Universal Judge of the living and the dead, and Who had come to this world to give testimony of the truth, in the midst of His anguish and the profound silence which He was maintaining, chose not to remain longer silent, or to fail to bear testimony to a truth so important, in circumstances which so urgently demanded it. Therefore, when the Governor said to Him—'Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee?' our Saviour, in order to rebuke his pride and defend the honour of His own Eternal Father, from Whom all power is communicated; in order also to show that the dispensation of His Passion and death did not depend on the will and pleasure of Pilate, but on the will of God, answered him,[8] 'Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above.' For besides that Pilate had no legitimate power to condemn our Saviour, even the power which he had to crucify Him, in fact, he would not have had, if it had not been permitted by God, Who thought well at that time to leave the powers of darkness free. 'Think not then, Pilate, that thou art absolute in this matter, for to Him Who gave thee power thou art bound to give an account of the good or bad use thou makest of it. For this cause also, though thy sin was great in not judging Me in accordance with justice, those who delivered Me into thy hands have committed a much greater sin, since, blinded by envy and hatred, they have misrepresented My case and perverted its justice, and given Me over to a Pagan judge, putting force on him, and terrifying him in order that he might crucify Me.'

Pilate was warned by these words that he had a Superior in heaven to Whom he would have to give an account of what he did, and he considered that even if the sin of the Jews was greater, still his own sin would be great if he condemned our Lord, and so fear began to find entrance into his heart, and if he had hitherto desired to favour Him,[9] from that time he openly

[8] St. John xix. 11. [9] *Ibid.* 12.

declared that he desired to release Him, and sought for ways and means to do so. The Jews, however, when they understood this,[10] began to shout, persevering in their demands, and urging no longer the accusation of blasphemy, because they saw that it had no effect upon the Governor, they returned to their first accusation regarding the pretensions which our Lord had made to be King, saying—'If thou givest liberty to a man such as this, it is clear that thou art not a friend to Cæsar, for whosoever maketh himself a King is against Cæsar.' As if to say—'If it does not move thee that He is a blasphemer against God, at least it ought to move thee that He is a traitor against Cæsar. Thou art the minister of Cæsar; in his name thou dost govern this province, thou art here in this city in order to defend and enlarge his jurisdiction and authority. It is very well that we, inspired by zeal to serve the Emperor, and to show ourselves loyal to his crown, have delivered to thee this Man, although He is our fellow-countryman, and that thou desirest to defend and protect Him. We will give the Emperor to understand what sort of ministers his are, and who it is in whom he has confided!'

These, and similar threats, they shouted into the ears of the Governor, who, like a bad minister and a weak judge, feared more to lose the friendship of Cæsar than that of God. And for this God chastised him by means of the same Cæsar,[11] who deprived him of his office and his life. When he had heard[12] and reflected upon those last words concerning the friendship of Cæsar, they had so great influence on him that he was constrained to yield, and[13] 'the Chief Priests with loud voices requiring that He might be crucified, and their voices grew and prevailed.' And Pilate determined to yield to them and to do as they required.

[10] St. John xix. 12.

[11] Josephus, l. xviii. *Antiq.* c. xvii.; Euseb. l. ii. *Histor. Eccles.* c. vii.

[12] St. John xix. 13. [13] St. Luke xxiii. 23.

CHAPTER XXV.

Pilate pronounces sentence of death on our Saviour.

PILATE, disturbed by the shouts of the Jews, and by the fear he had of Cæsar, deemed that it would be easier to set at nought the humility and silence of our Saviour than the fury and hatred of His accusers. He therefore resolved to give sentence against our Saviour, and thereby to content and appease the Jews. It must have been a little after half-past ten or nearly eleven o'clock, according to our reckoning,[1] when Pilate at last settled to yield, and thus to decide the matter. From that time he set himself to perform, by way of supplement, all the ceremonies necessary for completing the process, and for pronouncing sentence with the solemnity which the law and custom required.

First, then, he seated himself[2] *pro tribunali*—'on his tribunal,' in the place which in Greek is called *Lithostrotos*, and in Hebrew *Gabbatha*. This tribunal was lofty and elevated (for this is the signification of *Gabbatha*), and its floor was curiously composed of small stones of various colours, giving an appearance of wealth and majesty, such as the Greeks call *Lithostrotos*. It joined on to the outer hall of the prætorium, and was open and visible from the whole piece of ground in front, and it could be entered from behind from the prætorium. Pilate, then,[3] brought Jesus forth, that is to say, he brought Him out of the prætorium where he had questioned Him to this place, and seating Himself there, *pro tribunali*—'on his judgment seat,' in the sight of all the people of the Jews who were there present, to show them how unreasonably and without cause they had raised all this tumult, he said to them[4]—*Ecce*

[1] St. John xix. 14. [2] *Ibid.* 13. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* 14.

Rex vester! As though he had said—'Behold this Man Whom you have accused of desiring to make Himself a King; He has not the mien of a King, and hardly even the figure of a man.' And when they still cried out—'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him,' Pilate, as though mocking them and laughing at them, said—'Am I to crucify your King?' That is—'Will you allow yourselves to be so outraged and insulted as to permit it to be said that I executed upon a cross Him Who made Himself your King?' But they cried out, saying that they did not desire or recognize Him to be their King, nor had they any other King than Cæsar. This is what those questions and answers signified, according to the letter of the history, and the outward facts of the case.

If, however, we desire to behold the mysterious secret which was inclosed therein, we shall find that two entirely different causes were treated of here. The first had regard to our Saviour, whether He should be crucified or not, and the whole weight of this depended on the question whether He were a blasphemer against God or a traitor against Cæsar, these things being the two articles of His accusation, respecting which the judge had three times exonerated Him, and had testified publicly to His innocence. The second cause had regard to the State and the people of the Jews—whether it were to be reprobated and punished, and thenceforward neither be nor call itself the people of God. And the turning point of this cause lay in their either receiving Jesus Christ our Lord as their King and Messias, or rejecting and denying Him, according to what is written in Daniel,[5] that the people who should deny Him should not be His people any more. And just as the Jewish people made use of the Governor of the Romans to carry out their ends against our Saviour, so God our Lord also made use of the self same Governor against the Jews, making him a witness of His innocence and a proclaimer of His Kingdom, and putting into his mouth words and reasonings which, perchance, he did not himself understand when he uttered them.

[5] ix. 26.

The Governor, then, was seated in his seat of judgment and about to pronounce a definitive sentence on these two matters; and although it is true that during the Passion the Jews had already openly declared themselves by accusing our Saviour, requiring His death, choosing Barabbas instead of Him, resisting the judge who attempted to defend Him, and breaking out into tumults and threats when they saw that he wished to release Him; yet, notwithstanding all this, God, the most just Judge, decreed that they should ratify and publicly confirm all this by their own word before the process against them should be concluded, and that, as this was a matter so grave and weighty, it should be transacted with all possible solemnity. Therefore, our Lord Himself being there present in His own Person, and all the people of the Jews with their leaders and heads, namely, the Chief Priests, Judges, and Scribes, being also present, in the public place of the city of Jerusalem, the time being about noon, the season the most solemn festival of the Pasch, on the day also called the Vespers or Preparation (termed by them Parasceve)[6] of the following Sabbath, there being moreover present an innumerable concourse of people from all the world—the Governor of the Romans, Pontius Pilate, being seated on his seat of judgment, in a loud, clear, intelligible voice, made solemn declaration, saying, *Ecce Rex vester*—'Behold here your King, your Messias Whom your law promised, prophesied, and prefigured. He says that His Kingdom is not of this world; see if you will believe Him, confess Him, and receive Him. And if any of you have any fears of Him that He desires to excite commotion among you, and to make Himself a King, as tyrants do, and to usurp by violence the kingdom of this world; behold how humiliated and punished He is! Are you content with what has been done against Him, or do you insist, notwithstanding, that we should proceed further?' Then the Jews, perceiving that it was now only a matter of form and ceremonial, cried out again, *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum*—'Away with this Man, away with Him; this is no time for formal citation;

[6] St. John xix. 14.

shorten the trial, have done with these delays, cut short all postponements, crucify Him at once.' To this Pilate answered, *Regem vestrum crucifigam ?* He said all this to give them more time and opportunity to reflect on the answer they should make, and to move them, through very shame, to desist from their demands. 'Is it your King that I am to crucify? Him Who, whether you like it or not, is proved by your prophets, and by the tokens contained in your Scriptures, to be your King and Messias? And even if He be not, He at any rate has had the name and the semblance of being your King. Do you really desire that, in spite of this, I should crucify Him to your dishonour and infamy, and that all the world should say that the Romans condemned the King of the Jews to so shameful and infamous a death?' All this is contained in the question, *Regem vestrum crucifigam !*

The Chief Priests, however,[7] whose passions were the stronger in proportion to their greater learning, and who as being greater men were more free and fearless, without any shame or fear of God, cried out, 'We have no king but Cæsar.' They ought to have understood, seeing they were learned, that if they were now without a king of their own, and had no king but Cæsar, then the time had arrived in which, according to the Scriptures, the promised King Messias must be among them. But blind and carried away by passion as they were, they had no desire to receive the King Whom God had sent to give them eternal liberty, and they condemned themselves of their own free will, and out of their own mouth, to perpetual servitude under strange kings.

At this time,[8] the Governor being on his seat ready to pronounce the sentence, a message came to him from his wife, in which she begged him very earnestly not to venture to condemn that just Man ; and the reason she gave was that she had suffered many things on account of this matter in visions which she had had that day, and which had left her full of terror and grief. What it was that she saw, and whether these visions were the work of the good or the evil spirit, the Evan-

[7] St. John xix. 15. [8] St. Matt. xxvii. 19.

gelist does not tell us. Many of the holy Fathers affirm that God our Lord sent them to her to give testimony to the innocence of our Saviour, and to help and strengthen the good will of the Judge by means of the warning given him by his wife, to whom it was revealed that that Man was holy and just (and even perchance, likewise, that He was the Son of God), and who was also shown the great calamities which were destined to come upon that city and its inhabitants, on account of the envy and hatred with which they were requiring his death. And therefore she began to fear lest the chastisement of the accusers might also fall in large measure upon her husband, who was the Judge. Therefore she said to him, *Nihil tibi et justo illi, multa enim passa sum hodie per visum propter eum*— 'I beg of thee and I warn thee to have no part in the condemnation and death of this just Man, for I would have thee know that the anguish and pains which I have suffered to-day, on account of Him, have been great, through things which I have seen, and which have been shown to me in visions.'

It was not our Lord's will to show this vision to the Governor himself, because, either he would not have believed it and would have looked on it as a vain dream, or he would not have published it or spoken of it, and even if he had done so, the people would not have believed it, because, knowing that he was inclined to favour our Saviour, they might have said that he was feigning revelations in order to set Him free. Therefore, the good wife had the vision and suffered much on account of it, she entirely believed in it, and had no heart to be silent respecting it. And so, filled with fear and consternation, she sent that message to her husband, he being already on the judgment seat, at the most critical moment of the whole business, and endeavoured to persuade him not to pronounce sentence, inspiring him with fear as to what he might have to suffer for this cause, and also moving him to compassion for what she had suffered. Pilate must have felt forced to consider the message carefully, and to ask many questions and give many answers concerning it, and so the people would quickly obtain knowledge of it, and the news would spread abroad

throughout the city as to what the wife of the Governor had seen in favour of our Saviour. And this was likewise a remarkable testimony to His innocence, and a means whereby to cast suspicion on those who abhorred and accused Him.

Some writers are of opinion that it was the devil who terrified the Governor's wife with these visions, in order thereby to prevent our Saviour from being put to death, which he already foresaw would occasion the complete overthrow of his kingdom. But how can one think that the devil would, on the one hand, endeavour by terrifying the wife of Pilate with visions to hinder the death of our Saviour, and on the other hand, that he would at the same time incite the Jews to demand it with so much fury and persistence? For, if the devil had really wished to put a stop to the Passion of our Lord and prevent His death, what other way or means would have been more brief or more easy than that of moving the souls of the Pontiffs and priests to compassion, seeing he was their lord and master? For, if they had desisted from their accusation, the affair would at once have been at an end so far as the Governor was concerned. However, even if so it were, that these visions were the work of the evil spirit, still they tended very much to the glory and honour of Christ our Lord. For, in such wise was He condemned, that all witnessed to His innocence and justice, not only men, that is, the judge who sentenced Him, his wife who sent him the message, and the centurion and soldiers who crucified Him, but also the elements, which were convulsed at His death, yea all, even to the very devils of hell themselves, if it be true that it was they who put those things into the head of Pilate's wife.

The priests alone, and the people inspired by them, persevered in their hardness and obstinacy.[9] And Pilate, when he saw that his efforts were of no avail, but that rather the tumult rose higher and higher, called for water and washed his hands before all the people. He did this, either to make them reflect and consider more what they were requiring and what responsibility they were taking upon themselves, or else in conformity

[9] St. Matt. xxvii. 24.

to the custom in use among the Jews themselves, when they wished to clear themselves from taking part in any matter, or to protest their innocence of any crime, and more particularly, as to the shedding of blood or the death of any man,[10] according to what was written in their law. Moreover, that he might declare himself more openly, and that they might not be ignorant of what he meant by that ceremony, he said to them,[11] 'I am innocent. I do not desire to take upon myself the death of this just Man, look you to it, for it will fall upon you, and all that will be done will be on your shoulders.' This was the last testimony which Pilate gave in the cause of our Saviour, thus by a public and solemn ceremony absolving Him and declaring Him to be a just Man, before he condemned Him; and thus, whilst he was about to condemn Him, he declared His justice and innocence. Here, verily, is a new and unheard of manner of delivering judgment! For other judges say that it is necessary they should condemn, because the issue of the trial makes it incumbent on them to do so. But Pilate, sitting in his seat of judgment—*pro tribunali*—washes his hands and says that he ought to absolve and not to condemn, and yet, notwithstanding, he condemns. He lies, therefore, when he says that he is innocent and without blame in condemning this just Man to death. It is not possible that the judge can be innocent who pronounces sentence against a man whom he knows, and whom the trial itself proves, not to deserve it.

O unjust and iniquitous Judge, who judged against his own judgment and condemned against his own will, and decided what he did not judge right, and commanded that what he did not desire should be carried into execution! Deceitful and doublefaced man, who wished to keep terms with God and with the world at once, and to conceal, by an outward washing of his hands, the ambition and human fear which he felt within his heart! O Pilate! would to God that thou wert the only judge who feared Cæsar more than God; that thou wert the only man who ever attended to the vociferations and tumult of the people rather than to justice and truth, the only one who

[10] Deut. xxi. 6. [11] St. Matt. xxvii. 24.

ever wished to conceal his evil life and his wicked deeds beneath good appearances! But little avails it to wash the hands and to gloss evil deeds over with good words, since we have to be judged by our Lord, Who esteems words so little, and Who has said that He must judge by deeds alone.

But, in fine, Pilate desired to wash his hands from this blood of our Redeemer, and the Jews, like bloodthirsty beasts, demanded that it should fall upon their own heads. So when he washed his hands, and said—'I am innocent and have nothing to do with the blood of this just Man,' all the people cried out[12]—'His blood be upon us and upon our children and descendants.' As if they had said that no blame whatever was to be attached to him on account of that death, and that if there were any they would take it on themselves, and bind themselves and their children in their name to pay the penalty of it. And the Jewish people having consented with so much publicity and solemnity, and after so many appeals made to them, to receive the penalty which the most unjust death of our Saviour merited, and having named by their own mouth the judge by whom the sentence was to be executed, that is to say, the Roman Emperor, since they desired no other king than he, the process was finished against them no less than against our Saviour. And so they remained subject to the penalty which they had merited, and which they afterwards paid, their Temple and State being destroyed by the Roman Emperors. And they who, until then, had been as trees planted in the heritage of the Lord, chose for their king a thorn or briar, for such indeed was the heathen Emperor, and fire came out of him (as was written)[13] and devoured them all. And because (as Isaias says)[14] 'they cast away the waters of Siloe that go with silence,' that is to say, the Empire of Christ, which is quiet and humble, and chose the Roman Emperor, who was like to a great and mighty river, God brought upon them many and terrible floods (that is to say, the armies of the Romans), which destroyed and overwhelmed them, so that they remained scattered, abject, and infamous, and subject to strangers, with-

[12] St. Matt. xxvii. 25. [13] Judges ix. 15. [14] viii. 6.

out retaining throughout the whole earth a hand's breadth of jurisdiction, since in our Saviour's cause they made so bad use of it.

There remaining now no other solemnity or ceremony for Pilate to perform, he declared the matter to be at an end. And wishing to satisfy the people[15] more than truth and his own conscience, he decreed that the sentence which they had required ought to be executed, although they had not proved it nor given good reason for it, and he pronounced the sentence —'that it was right to condemn, and that he condemned, Jesus of Nazareth to be taken along the public streets, preceded by a crier proclaiming his crime, to the place where malefactors and criminals were usually executed, and that there, despoiled of all His raiment, He should be nailed upon a cross with nails in His Feet and Hands, and that being thus nailed, He should hang there until He was dead, and this considering that He had been accused as a blasphemer and seditious person, and as having stirred up the people, calling Himself King of the Jews.'

The report immediately ran through all the city of the decision at which the Governor had arrived, and the sentence which he had pronounced, and how they were now dragging away Jesus the Nazarene to be crucified; Him Who had been regarded as a great saint, a great preacher, and a great prophet, Who had healed the sick, cured those possessed of devils, and raised the dead. Who shall describe the confusion and tumult which reigned throughout Jerusalem and the various opinions which were given respecting the business? Or who shall tell of the sorrow and dismay which filled the hearts of the disciples and of those who loved our Saviour? and on the other hand, the exultation of His enemies and accusers who had been so successful in their purpose, and had obtained so great a victory? All this must have afflicted the Heart of our Saviour with that pain which any one feels to see himself thus conquered by his enemies in spite of right and justice. His grief was so great, indeed, that the Holy Spirit would not be silent respecting it by

[15] St. Mark xv. 15.

the mouth of the Prophets, and therefore one of them says [16]— 'My enemies rejoiced against Me, and came together; scourges were gathered against Me, and I knew not.'

On the other hand, it appears that for this cause alone He entreated of His Eternal Father the resurrection of His body.[17] 'Enlighten,' He says, 'My eyes that I never sleep in death, lest at any time My enemy say, I have prevailed against Him. They that trouble Me will rejoice when I am moved, but I trust in Thy mercy.' And because this would be the occasion of much trouble to human hearts, our Saviour warned His Apostles specially of it on the night before, animating them with the hope of His resurrection, and saying to them [18]— 'Amen, Amen, I say to you that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be made sorrowful, but I will come to see you again, and your heart shall rejoice and be glad, and your joy no man will be able to take from you.'

[16] Psalm xxxiv. 15. [17] *Ibid* xvi. 4—6.
[18] St. John xvi. 20.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Our Saviour is led to be crucified with the Cross on His shoulders.

THE sentence upon our Saviour having been pronounced by the Governor, it was notified to Him by the officials, and He accepted it through obedience to His Father, with the same humility and charity as He had accepted it the first moment that He was conceived, saying what had been written in the Psalm,[1] *Deus meus volui, et legem tuam in medio cordis mei*—'I have desired it, O My God, and Thy law in the midst of My Heart.'

In the same Psalm it is said, in the Person of our Saviour—*Sacrificium et oblationem noluisti, aures autem perfecisti mihi* (or as St. Paul quotes it[2]—*Corpus autem aptasti mihi*); *Holocautomata pro peccato non postulasti, tunc dixi: Ecce venio, in capite libri scriptum est de me, ut facerem voluntatem tuam: Deus meus volui, et legem tuam in medio cordis mei.* That is—'Offerings and sacrifices Thou didst not desire, and therefore Thou gavest Me this body, that I might offer to Thee in it an agreeable sacrifice. The burnt offerings and sacrifices of those who are wont to offer them for sin Thou didst not desire nor require; then I said, Now I come in due season. In the beginning of the book it is written of Me that I should be a great fulfiller of Thy will; therefore I desire it so, My God, and Thy commandment (although it should be to die) I hold in the midst of My Heart.' This is what is written in the Psalm, and it cannot but be doubted but that in that hour the Heart of our Saviour was filled with very fervent affections of profound obedience and most ardent charity towards God and towards man, and we may believe that He would say—'For this,

[1] xxxix. 9. [2] Heb. x. 5—7.

Father, I was born, and for this I came into the world, not to seek My own pleasure and glory, but Thine, and the salvation of the souls which Thou hast commended to Me. Mankind were the criminals, the accused, and those who were to be condemned before Thy most just tribunal, and I, in order to liberate them from the just and rigorous sentence which would have been pronounced upon them, have presented Myself as a criminal and culpable before that august tribunal, to be condemned before it as I am. Receive, Eternal Father, this sentence given against Me in exchange for that which Thou wouldst have had to give against them, and since I have been condemned by them, albeit I am innocent and just, let them be set free and absolved through Me, although they are culpable and sinners.'

Pilate, having now brought to an end all that belonged to his office, retired within his house, giving place to the executioners to carry out the sentence. The priests gave orders that it should be published throughout the whole city, and that information should be given to the neighbours and strangers who had come to celebrate the Pasch, that the Governor, having been convinced, according to information he had received, of the crimes and impostures of this Man, had condemned Him to be crucified with other two thieves. In consequence of this the concourse of people who flocked to the house of the Governor would be extraordinarily great, all being desirous to be witnesses of so remarkable an event. The Judge having already departed, the officers took possession of the condemned criminal. This is what the Evangelist signifies when he says,[3] *Susceperunt autem Jesum*—'they took Jesus;' that is, those who were to carry out the sentence took Him into their power, according to what is written in the Psalm,[4] *Susceperunt me sicut leo paratus ad prædam*—'They took Me as a lion ready for the prey.'

The first thing which they did[5] was to take off the cloak or purple vestment with which they had clad Him in scorn, renewing, meanwhile, their insults and rudeness, and once

[3] St. John xix. 16. [4] xvi. 12. [5] St. Matt. xxvii. 31.

more uncovering to men that virginal body, all bloody and scored with many wounds. This purple garment in which our Lord was mocked, reddened as it was with His blood, was left to us by Him as a rich inheritance; and for this cause He desired to be divested of it, that we might clothe ourselves with it, and honour and prize it,[6] desiring to suffer insults, false charges, and outrages, and to be looked upon and considered as fools, so as in some way to resemble and imitate our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ. For this is to array ourselves in His garment and livery, in which He clothed Himself for our greater spiritual profit, giving us an example that in all things possible to us we should, with the aid of the divine grace, desire to imitate and follow Him, since He is the path which leads men to life eternal.

The Evangelist does not say that they took off the crown of thorns, and therefore it appears that it remained upon His head, that He might go crowned as an acceptable victim to the altar of the Cross. It was not reason that they should uncrown Him Who was King eternal and of all worlds. And if they took off the purple therewith to clothe and honour His mystical body, it was fitting that the crown should remain fixed on Him, since He is the Head of this body.

After having taken off the purple robe,[7] they put His own garments once more upon Him, thereby to do Him greater dishonour, and that He might be more readily recognized by those garments when He was being taken to execution. The purple garment could be easily removed because, as we said above, it was fashioned like a mantle open in front, but the seamless tunic, which was closed up, and which it was therefore necessary to put on over the head, who shall say with how little pity and how much cruelty the executioners put it on Him? For the garment would stick upon the crown of thorns, and when by pulling it over Him they endeavoured to get it into its place they would renew His sufferings most acutely, for the thorns which were already fastened in His head would be moved, and others would be forced into it and pierce it. All this must

[6] S. P. Ignat. *Exam.* c. iv. sec. 44. [7] St. Mark xv. 22.

have been done in the court of the prætorium, where the soldiers had mocked at our Saviour, and at the gate was placed the cross, of large size and height, as was meet for one of so great stature Who was about to be placed upon it, and as He Himself says,[8] to be 'lifted up from the earth.'

And although they had given liberty to Barabbas,[9] who was a thief, a homicide, and a seditious man, there still remained in prison two thieves who had been condemned to death, and it was resolved that they should be crucified in company with our Saviour. The Jews most likely asked this favour, to which the Governor would be glad to consent, first, that this act of justice might be performed with greater solemnity, and that a notable spectacle might be presented to the crowds who had gathered together, secondly, for the greater infamy and dishonour of our Saviour, and also the better to dissemble and hide the malice and passion with which they had proceeded in His cause, making it one with that of the thieves, and desiring that all should think and persuade themselves that He also had been condemned with the same justice as the others. But God made use of their detestable intentions to render more illustrious the example of humility given by His Son, and, as St. Mark says,[10] in order that the prophecy of Isaias might be fulfilled which says, *Et cum sceleratis reputatus est*—'And he was reckoned with the wicked.' Most likely the public prison would adjoin the dwelling of the Governor, and they would take these thieves from the place where they were to the court of the prætorium, where our Lord was waiting for them. He looked on them and received them with the same tranquillity and kindness with which He always received sinners, and more especially these who were destined to be the companions of His dishonour and of his torments. They would perchance begin at once to blaspheme Him through impatience at their own punishment and disdain and contempt of our Lord, seeing that it was only in order to increase His dishonour that their punishment was thus inflicted before the time, and that they had been brought out on so solemn a day in His company.

[8] St. John xii. 32. [9] St. Luke xxiii. 25. [10] *Ibid* xv. 28

All these preparations were made under the eyes of the Blessed Virgin, who was aware very distinctly of everything that took place, who heard the tumult and the cries of the people who had gathered together, and saw everything which could be seen from a convenient place somewhat apart. The holy women who were with her, seeing the goodwill which Pilate had shown, the resistance he had made to the Chief Priests and the people, and the measures he had taken to set our Lord at liberty, had conceived hopes of a better result. But when they saw the Judge yield, and the sentence given and published, and that it was about to be executed, what language can express the grief of their hearts, and the tears which overflowed their eyes? But the most holy Virgin, who knew better than they what was about to take place, and was well prepared for this bitter and terrible moment, neither did nor said anything which was not full of the greatest magnanimity and modesty, the Holy Spirit strengthening her and increasing her powers in proportion as the occasion required. And pierced though she was by the most bitter grief, nevertheless, being prevented by divine grace and taught by God, Who guided her to the holy mountain to share more closely in the outrages and torments of her Son, she determined to place herself at a spot whence she could see and be seen by Him as He passed, and with marvellous courage and fortitude she went forward with her holy companions and reached the place which she desired.

There was outside the city a little hill, lying between the northern and western sides of Mount Sion, on the left hand on coming out of the gate named Judiciaria, which is on the western side of the city. This place was set apart for the execution of justice on criminals, and on that account it was outside the city, that the inhabitants might not be horrified by the sight of the dead bodies of the malefactors. But it was not very far off,[11] so that the people might, without much trouble, be present at the execution of malefactors, a thing which for the sake of example and of common warning is usually provided for in cities. Those who have taken measurements in the Holy

[11] St. John xix. 20.

Land and have given us an account of it, say[12] that this hill is five hundred paces from the city, and one thousand three hundred and twenty-one from the house of Pilate. The place is called in Hebrew *Golgotha*, which has the same signification that *locus Calvariæ* has in Latin, and in our language the place of skulls, which for shortness sake is commonly called *Calvary*. It was so called either because malefactors were beheaded there, and that generally speaking their heads were not buried; or because the bodies of the criminals remained there until consumed by time and there was nothing left but the bones; and for one cause or other the place was full of skulls.

It is not meet to pass over in silence, that it was a tradition of the Hebrews, and is an opinion received by learned authors and holy doctors,[13] that the body of the first man and father of us all, Adam, was interred on that spot and that his skull was there, from which circumstance the hill took its name, and was called *Golgotha*, or *the place of a skull*. If it were so (which all do not admit), it was not without a mysterious and special providence of God, that the second Adam came to die where the first was interred, and that the new beginning of life was given on the very spot where was the body of him who was the origin of our death; and the Blood of the Son of God fell upon the head of him, who, being head of the human race, communicated to all his descendants the sin which was to be washed out by this Blood. However this may be, the place was looked upon as infamous and unclean by the Jews, and as abominable by all. On this spot therefore they determined to crucify our Saviour, punishing Him as a malefactor in the company of the others, making Him equal in all things with them, in order that His dishonour might be greater, and so they led Him along the public and more frequented streets to this self same place of execution, set apart for other malefactors.

[12] Adricom. *Theatr. Terr. Sanctæ Descript. Jer.* 118.

[13] Orig. *Tract.* 33 *in Matt.*; Cyprian, *Serm. de Resur.*; Athan. *Serm. de Pas. et Cruc.*; Ambrose, lib. 10 *in Luc.*; Basil, *in* c. 5 *Isaiæ*; Epiphan. *Hær.* 46.; Chrys. *Homil.* 84 *in Joan.*; August. *Serm.* 71 *De Temp.* et lib. 16 *De Civit.* c. 31.

In this manner was accomplished, as St. Paul states,[14] that which was commanded in Leviticus, that the blood of those beasts who were sacrificed for sin should be brought into the tabernacle and Sanctuary, but that their bodies should be burnt outside the camp. On which account, Jesus our Saviour, to sanctify the people, suffered likewise outside the gate of the city.

Et eduxerunt eum[15]—and all these things being duly prepared, they led Him forth to be crucified, with all the solemnities observed in the case of other criminals, and, indeed, with still greater in this case, on account of the particular circumstances connected with it. The concourse of people in the streets was extraordinary, for our Lord was well known throughout all the country, and on account of the Pasch Jerusalem was full of strangers. All spoke of the matter, because the trial had been conducted with so much violence and publicity, and various opinions were given, some excusing and others condemning the Person of our Saviour, and espousing the opinion of their Scribes and High Priests. The confluence of the people would be great, coming and going to and from the Governor's house, and they would spread the rumour that our Saviour was now just about to be brought forth, all desiring to be the first to behold Him come out, in a condition, in their opinion, so miserable.

Our Lord then came forth from the house of the Governor, and a great crowd of people with Him. He came forth in the company of the executioners and officers, who dragged Him along by a rope fastened round His neck, and He was received by the people gathered together at the gate and in the court, with all the noise and murmurs common on such occasions, every one gazing curiously at His face, and taking note of His aspect and appearance, which was that of One disfigured with blows, and blood, and spitting, so that it must have struck them very much, and He was so changed that those who had known and conversed with Him hardly recognized Him.

The cross on which He was to be placed was ready prepared outside the door of Pilate's house, at a distance of about six and twenty paces, which would be a convenient space for

[14] Heb. xiii. 11. [15] St. John xix. 16.

putting the procession in order. It is said that the cross was fifteen feet in height. and the beam which traversed it eight feet, the girth of it being in proportion to its size, and to what was requisite in order to bear a body of the stature of our Lord. This great and lofty cross would be the first thing which our Lord saw when He came forth out of the door, and in it He recognized the weapon of His victory, the sceptre of His Kingdom, the tribunal of His clemency, and the key with which He would open the gates of heaven.

As soon as He came near it, those barbarous ministers, in whom there does not seem to have remained one spark of humanity, commanded Him to take it on His shoulders and Himself to bear it to the place where He was to be nailed upon it. Oh, how new a manner of executing a sentence, that the criminal should Himself take His cross on His shoulders, and that He Who is condemned to death should carry the instrument of His death! When perverse and crime-stained men are taken away to their punishment, the sword or other instrument by which they are to be deprived of life is hidden from them, that they may escape the torment of seeing it, and yet they would make Him, Who has bestowed life upon us all, gaze upon, embrace, and carry on His shoulders, the wood of His death on which He was to be nailed! Being, moreover, so large and heavy as it was, even a healthy and robust man would hardly have been able to carry it. How much less was He able to bear it Who was of so delicate a frame, and who was now so weakened and consumed by all He had undergone!

It may indeed be true, as some say, that it was usual to make criminals carry the cross on which they were to be crucified; and to this custom it seems that the words of our Saviour alluded—'He that will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.' For why should He have commanded them to take up their cross, unless it had been customary for those who were to be crucified to do so? But even if it were so, not only was it great cruelty to make our Saviour carry and sustain so great a weight when He could hardly hold Himself

up, but it was also a sign of the greatest contempt. For the cross being so infamous and base a thing, and carried only by those who were to be placed upon it, there was clearly in their opinion no one so vile and despicable as He, or who could or would take it upon himself but He alone. They did not consider His weakness nor His weariness and fatigue, for they made no account of Him at all; all they thought of was to drag Him through the public streets in the sight of the people, humiliated and outraged by so infamous a burthen, and that He might be known by this sign of bearing the cross as the Man Who was to be crucified upon it. Our Lord embraced it gladly, seeing and considering the marvels which He was to work by its means, and with it He took upon His shoulders the burthen of our sins, which He alone could bear, and raised on high the sceptre of His empire, as Isaias says,[16] *Factus est principatus super humerum ejus*—'His Kingdom and His Government He bare upon His shoulders.' *Et bajulans sibi crucem exivit in eum, qui dicitur Calvariæ locum*[17]—'And bearing His Cross, He went forth to the place which is called Calvary.'

In this manner He began His progress through the principal streets of Jerusalem. In front went a great number of people, and then the ancients and the doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, all rejoicing greatly in the victory which they had obtained. The soldiers and men of war followed with their arms, for if they had borne them when they were apprehending Him, much more would they do so now when they were taking Him to be crucified. For they were always fearing that His disciples would raise a disturbance amongst the people, for which it was well to be prepared, or for anything else which might happen. After the guards went the heathen executioners, with nails, gimlets, ropes, hammers, and other necessary articles. Lastly came the condemned, who were three; the thieves first, and after them, as being the most remarkable, our Saviour with the Cross upon His shoulders, followed[18] by a great multitude of people and of women who bewailed and

[16] ix. 6. [17] St. John xix. 17. [18] St. Luke xxiii. 27.

lamented Him. For there were many who wished Him well and who were under obligations to Him for the benefits which they had received from Him. Nor was there wanting on an occasion so solemn the voice of the crier, who proclaimed how Pilate had commanded justice to be done upon that Man because He was a blasphemer against God, a traitor against Cæsar, and a stirrer up of the people by His impostures and lies. In short, they attributed to our Lord such crimes as agreed well with the rigorous sentence which was to be executed upon Him. The rattling of arms and the cries of the officials were loud, as they tried to make room and force their way through the people, who pressed obstinately upon each other to obtain a closer view of the face of our Saviour, rushing along first one street and then another, and endeavouring to find shorter ways, so as to see once more One Whom they had known in so different a state. In this manner Cain, the elder brother, led Abel into the field to deprive him of life

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our Saviour meets His most Blessed Mother and arrives at Calvary.

Not the least of the pains of this progress came from the insults and abusive language uttered by those who stood looking on in the streets and at the windows, because, although the holy Evangelists do not speak of it, the mere facts of the case make us understand what must have taken place amidst such a crowd. For, having heard so many things proclaimed against our Lord, and being persuaded that they were well grounded, those who had not believed in Him were rejoiced to see the truth declared, and those who had believed were ashamed that they had believed lies. And both the one and the other revenged themselves with their tongues, multiplying insults and reproaches, and launching maledictions against Him Who, in their opinion, so well merited them. And thus was fulfilled that which so many years before had been said by the Prophet: *Adversum me loquebantur*[1] *qui sedebant in porta; et in me psallebant qui bibebant vinum*—'They that sat in the gate,' he says, 'spake against Me; and they that drank wine made Me their song.' And many other things the Prophet says in this Psalm to the same purpose.

The weight of the Cross was very great, and the shoulders upon which it was laid were wounded and flayed with the scourges. As it was so large, He was forced to drag it along the streets, and because of the inequality of the stones it was constantly jolting against Him and striking Him. These repeated blows, and His staggering from side to side, must have caused great torture to the body of our Saviour, and must have made the thorns pierce still more deeply into His head. All this and

[1] Psalm lxviii. 13.

the hurry and cruelty of the executioners, was the cause why our Saviour, after going a few steps on His way, fell down with the Cross upon Him.

The most holy Virgin had placed herself in a convenient position to see her Son, and to go through that meeting which would cost her so much grief, certain, at the same time, of the divine grace which would be her aid on this occasion, so as neither to do nor to say anything unworthy of herself, of the light and knowledge which she had received respecting that mystery, and of the conformity which she had with the will of God. Nevertheless, what could stem her emotion and her grief? And when from afar she saw the weapons and heard the voices of those who were lifting Him up after He had fallen, and heard the proclamation of the crimes laid to the charge of her Son, how could it have been but that a sharp sword of bitter grief pierced the heart of the Mother, and that copious floods of tears ran from her eyes? O Virgin blessed above all women and afflicted above all! Wherefore, O Lady, hast thou quitted thy beloved solitude and exposed thyself to the throng of men so rude and profane? And if thou wert compelled to this through love of thy Son, wherefore didst thou desire to give and receive such a blow, adding to His grief by the sight of thee, and receiving so terrible a wound thyself by seeing Him?

But the Blessed Virgin did not think it contrary to her recollection to be present at that sight, wherein was the source of all holiness, nor would her own heart have allowed her not to see that work of God, which was destined to be throughout her whole life the matter of her contemplation and her incentive to love and charity. For as God was doing so great a work as this upon the earth, a work in which, more than in any other, He displayed the greatness of His wisdom, His power and His goodness, and also the greatness of His justice and mercy, and of His immense charity, and there being present at this sight so many blind and passionate judges, who neither understood nor esteemed it, nor felt in regard to it as was meet, the Divine Majesty willed that the Blessed Virgin His Mother should not fail to be present, seeing that she alone understood it and

fathomed it and knew how to esteem it, and no other creature could as she could. For every one desires that his works, especially if they are of great worth, should come to light in the presence of those who can esteem and understand them.

Our Lady, then, being in such a place, and within view of such a spectacle, what waves and storms must have passed through her virginal heart! What tears would stream from her sacred eyes! For if our hearts leap, and if the hairs rise on our head, on seeing a stranger led to die, of whom we know nothing, and if our hearts fail us to look him in the face, what must have been the strength from heaven which the Blessed Virgin had to enable her to behold her Son, Who, so disfigured and in such torment, was going to die so ignominiously upon the Cross? Yet still she did behold Him, and beheld Him very close, and her Son looked at her who was His Mother, and their eyes met, and the heart of each was pierced with the sorrow and anguish of the other, and yet they were no less rejoiced to look upon one another, and to see the fidelity and love which each recognized in the other. They uttered no words, for the hurry did not permit it, and if they had had much leisure, their sorrow was so great, that it would have choked their throats and they could not have found words to utter. But those who desire to do so can speak with their eyes and make their hearts understand one another, and especially when their eyes are so vivid and penetrating as were those of that Son and of that Mother.

For then the Son beheld that rapture and wondering awe that filled the soul of His sacred Mother, and which was caused by seeing the sublimity of the majesty of God, and because she knew so well and believed with such perfect faith in the Person of Christ, treated now with such indignity. He beheld the bitter grief of that virginal heart on seeing before her eyes her beloved Son, worthy of all honour and reverence, subjected to so great dishonour and torment. He beheld the gratitude, so humble and so true, with which the Mother thanked her Son for that copious and costly redemption which He was bestowing upon the whole human race. He beheld her loyal recognition

of that rich and blessed part which fell to her in this redemption. He saw that will so resigned, so subject and so conformed to the will of the Eternal Father in a matter so difficult and so repugnant to human nature. That most loving Son saw, in the last place, the tears and grief and heartbreaking of His Mother, which sprang from love and pity for His sufferings. And our Saviour being encompassed by so many cruel enemies, who, as it is written,[2] besieged Him like great bulls and made assault against Him like a lion ravening and roaring, and looking on one hand and on the other,[3] and seeing that there was no one that would help Him nor rise in His defence, could not but be consoled in finding so near Him one who knew Him better than any other creature, one who knew how to estimate the work He had done and to be grateful for the love which had brought Him to such a pass, and had constrained Him to do battle with His enemies in so great straits.

On the other hand, the Mother beholding her Son exposed to so great outrages and suffering such grief, recognized in Him the burning love for God and men which inflamed His breast; the will which was in such entire conformity with and so wholly subject to the commandment of His Eternal Father; the courage and joyfulness of heart with which He went to suffer for men, and also the redemption of the human race, the renovation of the world, the abundance of grace and the inestimable rewards of glory and eternal life, which were to result from the temporal death of her Son. As she beheld all this, her knowledge of the work He was performing, and of the enterprise He had undertaken, must have swollen to such a height as not to let her rest without going after Him to the holy mountain, to be present at the sacrifice which He, the true High Priest, was about to offer, in order to appease the anger of God and to reconcile all mankind to Him. In this manner, then, our Saviour walked on, His body bent with the weight of the Cross, His eyes fastened, and as it were blinded with tears and blood, His footsteps slow and feeble, his knees trembling, following His two companions in punishment,

[2] Psalm xxl. 13. [3] *Ibid* cxli, 5.

although for so different a cause, amidst the jeers and insults of the Jews, the pushes and maltreatment of the executioners, and the tears and bewailings of the devout and pious women. Having carried His Cross for His greater disgrace through all the public streets of the city, it is said that on issuing from it at the gate which is called Judiciaria, our Saviour fell a second time, the strength required for going any further with such a burthen having altogether failed Him. Then they thought to give Him some relief in that ascent to Calvary,[4] and looked about for some one to take His Cross and carry it to its place. Not that they did this from compassion (for they did not feel any), but because they saw that they could not proceed any further, for He could now barely walk, and fell continually under His burthen, and they could not rest quiet until they saw the sentence executed, for they were ever fearing something new to hinder it, either on the part of the judge or of the crowd. Or, perhaps, because our Saviour was now so spent and exhausted, they had reason to fear that He might not last out long enough for them to fasten Him, as was their desire, to the Cross. For this cause, then, they sought for some one to carry it, and as the burthen was so disgraceful, and the carrying of it a sign that the bearer was about to be crucified, there was no one to be found who was willing to aid our Saviour in this.

Just at this time, however, they found ready to their hands a man who was called Simon,[5] a native of Cyrene, a renowned and principal city in Africa. He was father of Alexander[6] and Rufus, who must have been, at the time St. Mark wrote, good and well known Christians, and as such the Evangelist names them in order through them to make known their father. Simon was coming[7] from his work, or from his villa or farm, when they met him. Then they laid hold of him and hired him for the office, and paying him for his work, made him carry the Cross[8] and follow our Saviour closely. In this manner, though He was relieved of the weight, the dishonour was still the same, the

[4] St. Matt. xxvii. 32. [5] *Ibid.* [6] St. Mark xv. 21.
[7] St. Luke xxiii. 26. [8] *Ibid.*

Cross being carried so closely after Him that all would perceive it was intended for Him. But Simon was in truth a man greatly blessed, seeing he was hired to carry so glorious a burthen, and his reward was doubtless very great, because whilst embracing the Cross he was made to know the virtue and excellency thereof, and of our Saviour Who was destined to die upon it, and so he obtained salvation and eternal life by means of it!

Whilst this was being arranged, and the Cyrenian was being laden with the Cross, our Saviour stopped awhile, and, as we are told by tradition, seated Himself upon a stone which is shown to pilgrims at the present day. This was a good occasion for a pious woman called Veronica, whom some think was the same woman who was cured by our Saviour[9] of an issue of blood, and who now, seeing His face so disfigured with blood mingled with sweat, drew near without any one hindering her, and with the utmost compassion and reverence began to wipe it with a white linen handkerchief doubled in three folds, which she had; and on each of the three folds there remained impressed by a special miracle the image of the divine face of our Saviour, Who bestowed upon her this gift in return for the service she had done Him, leaving us all thereby a pledge that He will impress His face and His presence upon our souls if we meditate upon His Cross, and with love and devotion associate ourselves in His sorrows. This history of the woman Veronica is regarded as a tradition worthy of faith, and one of these impressions is kept and shown at Rome with great veneration; another in Spain at the city of Jaen; and the third, it is said, is at Jerusalem.

Some think that this devout woman came to wipe the face of our Saviour before He came out of the city, and that the place where she did so is shown to this day; but there is little or no certainty as to this matter. What the holy Evangelist says is, that whilst He was going to Calvary our Saviour did not cease to teach, console, exhort, and perform all the offices of His ministry. For some good women, who did not,

[9] St. Matt. ix. 20.

however, belong to these who had followed our Saviour from Galilee,[10] for these remained in the company of the Blessed Virgin, but some other good women living near Jerusalem, moved by the natural compassion entertained by women for any calamity of others, wept bitterly at seeing Christ our Lord Whom they had beheld preaching, performing so many miracles, and held in so great reputation, now reduced to so low and miserable a condition as to be taken away publicly to be crucified. But when our Lord saw them shedding their tears He took notice of it, not allowing to weep for Him those who had so much cause to weep for themselves. For to bewail the death of our Lord is a holy and pious thing when it springs from love and compassion, and especially if at the same time we bewail our sins, which were the cause of that death. Nevertheless, as our Saviour saw how those good women were lamenting over Him as an unfortunate and miserable person, who, without being able to defend himself, was being violently taken to be crucified; when He saw, moreover, how ignorant they were of the calamities which were to fall upon themselves, He warned them respecting those future evils, and undeceived them in respect to Himself, saying, 'Daughters of Jerusalem'—for so He called the inhabitants and those living near the city —'weep not for Me as for an unfortunate man who is suffering for his crimes and against his will, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For that which you think of Me, that I am miserable and unfortunate in that I die at the hands of My enemies, this same thing is to come to pass for you and for them. For if I die it is of My own will, and not through any fault, but through obedience to My Father, and for the good of the whole world, and to rise again very shortly, and to be exalted in glory and honour above all glory and honour. But upon you will very soon come days of such trouble and anguish that those will esteem themselves happy who have not borne children, that so they may not see them suffer from the calamity which will come upon you. Which calamity will be so great that men will feel it better to die than endure such, and

[10] St. Matt. xxvii. 55.

like men who desire death and cannot obtain it, they will call upon the mountains to come and fall upon them, and on the hills to bury them alive, so that even by a miserable death they may be freed from evils so tremendous.'

Quia si in viridi ligno hæc faciunt, in arido quid fiet?—'For if they do these things in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?' Our Saviour taught them to learn from His Passion the fear of God and of His justice, and compared Himself to a green and fruitful tree and them to a dry and withered stock which was ready for the fire, and He reasoned thus—'If Divine Justice has not pardoned Me Who am innocent, and for the sins of others makes me suffer so great evils, how can you expect it to forbear with you for your many and great sins of your own without visiting them with most rigorous chastisement? If the divine anger has burnt up the green tree as you see, after what manner do you think it will be kindled in you who for your sins are as meet for punishment as dry wood is for the fire?' And thus they arrived at the mount which they called Golgotha, and which we call Calvary; the place in which malefactors suffered and in which, as says the Prophet,[11] *Rex noster Deus ante sæcula operatus est salutem in medio terræ*—'God is our King for ever, He hath wrought salvation in the middle of the earth.'

[11] Psalm lxxiii. 12.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Some doubts respecting this progress to Calvary explained.

It will not be inopportune to insert in this place to the letter what Adrichomius has written respecting this progress in his work entitled *Theatre of the Holy Land*, and his words are as follows—

'From the palace of Pilate to the place where the Cross was fixed in a rock is one thousand three hundred and twenty one paces, or according to another computation, three thousand three hundred and three feet. Our Saviour beginning His progress from the palace of Pilate, at the distance of twenty six paces, or sixty five feet, reached the place where the Cross was placed upon His shoulders. From thence dragging His cross for eighty paces, or two hundred feet, he reached the place where, according to tradition, He fell the first time with the Cross. Distant from there some sixty paces and three feet, or one hundred and fifty three feet, is the place where the Blessed Virgin, with the Apostle St. John, met her Son. And distant from there seventy one paces one foot and a half, or a hundred and seventy nine feet, He reached a place where three roads meet, where Simon the Cyrenian was made to carry the cross. From thence a hundred and ninety one paces and half a foot, or four hundred and seventy eight feet further on, He was met by Veronica. From thence to the gate of the city which was called Judiciaria is three hundred and thirty six paces and two feet, or eight hundred and forty two feet, where He fell a second time with the Cross. From thence there is a gradual rise up a stony track towards the north, and proceeding three hundred and forty eight paces and two feet, or eight hundred and seventy two feet, the place is reached where He

spoke to the weeping women. Going on a hundred and sixty one paces one foot and a half, or four hundred and four feet, He arrived at the brow of Calvary, where He fell for the last time. Eighteen paces, or forty five feet from there, is the place where the executioners unclothed Him and gave Him to drink of wine mingled with myrrh and gall. Twelve paces, or thirty feet still further, is the place where He was nailed upon the Cross. And finally, at fourteen paces, or thirty five feet distance, is the place where the Cross was raised and fixed.'

This the above named author states, from which we may perceive with how much piety he travelled along this road, since he has given such a minute account of every step of it; and the knowledge of how many paces more or less it was divided into, will aid us in our meditation, and enable us to form a better idea of the place where all these events happened.

Only there occurs one difficulty in connection with what this writer says, because, according to his account, Simon the Cyrenian was laden with the Cross within the city, and at a distance of five hundred and twenty seven paces from the Porta Judiciaria. But if this were so, how can it be made to agree with what he says later on, that when our Saviour arrived at this gate He fell a second time with the Cross? In order to ascertain what is most probable and likely as to this point, it is necessary in the first place to satisfy another doubt—namely, as to the manner in which Simon aided our Saviour to carry the Cross. Many ancient and modern painters agree in representing our Saviour as remaining with His Cross upon His shoulder, and Simon helping Him to carry it only by raising the end of it so that it should not drag along the ground; and perhaps they found this view on what St. Luke says[1]—*Et imposuerunt illi crucem portare post Jesum.* If this were so, it may very well have been that after the Cyrenian was hired, our Saviour should have fallen twice again beneath the Cross; because, in truth, the aid given to Him was very slight, and in a certain way it even added to the burthen, by throwing all the

[1] xxiii. 26.

weight of the Cross upon the shoulders of our Saviour. But if we carefully examine the text of the Evangelists, we shall consider more probable what is said by many of the Saints, that the Cross was taken from our Saviour altogether, and put on Simon, for St. Matthew says,[2] and St. Mark,[3] that they hired him not to help to carry, but himself to carry the Cross—*Hunc angariaverunt ut tolleret crucem ejus.* The words of St. Luke convey the same meaning if they are examined into—*Et imposuerunt illi crucem portare*, for what he afterwards says, *post Jesum*, is to give us to understand that He did not go either before our Saviour or at a distance from Him, but behind and close to Him. And if painters have understood and represented this in any other manner, it is, perhaps, because there was no other way of representing these two things in the same painting; that is to say, our Saviour Himself carrying His Cross, as St. John says,[4] and Simon the Cyrenian also carrying it, as the other Evangelists say.

By what has now been said, we may also answer the other doubt, namely, when did Simon begin to carry the Cross? It is most probable that it was at the coming out of the city (as we have said), in order to ascend the hill which lay between it and Cavalry. It appears that St. Matthew gives us to understand this, for, after he has related the crowning with thorns and the insults of the soldiers in the prætorium, he says: *Et duxerunt eum ut crucifigerent; exeuntes autem invenerunt hominem Cyrenæum, nomine Simonem*, etc.—'And they led him away,' he says, 'to crucify Him; and going out they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, him they forced to bear His Cross.' What, then, is this going out, when they found Simon? It must have been either when they came out of the house of the Governor, or when they came forth out of the city, but, whichever it may have been, it does not agree with what the abovenamed author says, that they obliged Simon to take up the Cross two hundred and thirty seven paces after they had come out of the prætorium, and five hundred and twenty seven before reaching the gate in order to leave the city. For, as to

[2] xxvii. 32. [3] xv. 21. [4] xix. 17.

saying that immediately on coming out of the house of Pilate they found this man and hired him, taking him by way of precaution, with the intention of making use of him when the necessity should press, this does not seem probable, nor does it agree well with the cruelty of those men, who neither thought nor desired in any way to alleviate our Saviour's sufferings, until they saw that He fell beneath the Cross and could not proceed any further. So that it appears that they hit on this plan on coming out of the city, and it seems also that this is rendered still more clear by what St. Mark says: *Et angariaverunt prætereuntem quempiam, Simonem Cyrenæum, venientem de villa*, etc. —'And they hired,' he says, 'one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by coming out of the country' from his farm or work; all which suggests that they were now out of the city, for they could see that the man was on his way and was coming from his farm or work, whereas of men who are inside the city it would not have been easy to see who was at rest or who was on his way, nor whence men came nor whither they were going. Thus, then, our Saviour took up His Cross at first alone, and afterwards delivered it to Simon. *Et bonus ordo nostri profectus est* (says St. Ambrose),[5] *ut prius crucis suæ trophæum ipse erigeret, deinde martyribus traderet erigendum*—'A good order of progress for us it is, that our Lord should first Himself raise the trophy of the Cross, and then hand it on to the martyrs to raise it after Him.'

Finally, it should be observed that what this author says about the place where they nailed our Saviour on the Cross being fourteen paces distant from the spot where the Cross was raised and fixed, takes for granted what many think, that our Saviour was nailed on the Cross while it was stretched on the ground. But this way of speaking is not perhaps the most probable, as we shall see in the following chapter.

[5] Lib. x. *in Lucam.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of the day and hour, and other circumstances, of the Crucifixion of our Lord.

Our Saviour, having arrived at Calvary, the holy Evangelists[1] state that He was crucified, but they do not explain the particular manner in which this was done, nor do they say a word more on this point, referring to the ordinary mode of crucifying malefactors, and thinking any amplification or stronger expression superfluous, after having said that they crucified Him. And although this is so, it will not be out of place to begin by ascertaining what seems most probable as to some circumstances of this mystery, in order so to clear the way better for meditation.

First, as regards the day. It is certain that our Lord was crucified on the sixth day, that is to say on Friday, and that His resurrection took place on the third day after, which was Sunday. What St. Gregory Nazianzene says on this subject is very worthy of note,[2] namely, that all the mystery of the Cross marvellously corresponds with the sin of the first man. Thus, he says, 'one tree is set against another tree, and one hand against another hand. Those hands, I say, that stretched themselves forth with fortitude, against the hand that stretched itself forth with incontinency; those hands that were fastened and pierced with nails against that which was free and unbound and loose, those that when, stretched forth, embraced, joined and gathered to themselves all the ends of the earth, against that which banished Adam from Paradise. Thus also the lifting up on high was the opposite of the fall; the gall was contrary to the sweetness, the crown of thorns to the pride of man, and death was opposed to death.' Thus speaks the Saint,

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 35; St. Mark xv. 24; St. Luke xxiii. 33; St. John xix. 18.
[2] *Orat.* i. *Apolog.*

showing how our Lord in His Passion and death retraced the steps by which Adam led us to death, and how, returning along the same path, He restored us to life. We may say the same of the day on which He died. For Adam was created on the sixth day, which was Friday, and having been a week in Paradise, on the following Friday, after his disobedience, he was expelled from it. Therefore our Lord willed to restore man on the self same day on which he was created, and to redeem him on the self same day as that on which he was lost, and to open to him the gates of Heaven on that on which he was banished from Paradise.

With regard to the hour, the difficulty is greater, for St. John says[3] that it was about the sixth hour when Pilate, being on his seat of judgment, determined to pronounce sentence—*Erat autem parasceve Paschæ, hora quasi sexta, et dicit Judæis: Ecce Rex vester.* And on the other hand, St. Mark says[4] that it was the third hour when they crucified Him, *Erat autem hora tertia, et crucifixerunt eum.* Although many explanations have been given as to these apparently conflicting words of the Evangelists, it is certain that our Saviour was crucified before noon, and very near that hour. This hour may with truth be called the third, and likewise the sixth hour, or near noon, because it must be remembered that the Jews divided the whole day, which we call the artificial day (that is, from sunrise until sunset), into four portions, each of these portions containing about three of our hours. From the rising of the sun until nine o'clock of our reckoning was the first hour; the third hour began from our nine o'clock and lasted until noon; from noon until three in the afternoon was the sixth hour, and the ninth hour was comprised between three o'clock and the setting of the sun. It is also certain that in the common mode of speech, the time between one hour and another—for example, between eleven and twelve—is called from the first, that is, if we are asked what time it then is, we say eleven, because it is eleven o'clock past and gone, although the time may be approaching noon; as also at half past eleven. or later, we still say with

[3] xix. 14. [4] xv. 25.

truth that is twelve o'clock or near. Thus, as the third hour lasted from nine o'clock until noon, and our Saviour was crucified before noon, St. Mark says with perfect truth that it was the third hour when they crucified Him; inasmuch as it would be still considerably before noon when they arrived at Calvary and began the process of crucifixion, all of which is understood by St. Mark in the expression of crucifying Him. Thus also, when Pilate seated himself on his judgment seat to pronounce sentence, it would be already eleven o'clock, or a little later, according to our reckoning, as we have said, and as there now remained only the lesser portion of the third hour before midday arrived, St. John says that it was about the sixth hour when Pilate pronounced sentence. On the other hand, as the Jews had everything ready prepared, and got through the passage to Calvary with great haste, and in order to proceed more quickly hired the Cyrenian, they thus reached Calvary and crucified our Lord before the third hour had come to an end.

But it is not without great cause and much mystery that the Evangelists speak of this difference. When they say that our Lord was crucified at the sixth hour, they speak thus that they may enhance the greatness of the miracle of the darkness which followed and which lasted during three hours upon the earth, that is to say, until the ninth hour, for the more near the darkness was to the point of noon, so much greater and more notorious was the miracle. The blessed St. Mark, who notes that our Saviour was crucified before the third hour was accomplished, tells us two things that are worthy of great consideration. The first is, that our Saviour was hanging on the Cross before He died, for the whole space of time which elapsed between the sixth hour and the ninth, and even something more, amounting to more than three hours of our account and reckoning. The second is (and if the Evangelist had not said it, it could barely have been believed), the short time which it took to conclude the cause of our Saviour. For although it was so grave a matter and beset with so many circumstances of great weight and difficulty, yet six hours did

not elapse between the time when it was begun and that at which it was ended. For it must have been after six o'clock in the morning when the Chief Priests and all their Council made the first accusation before Pilate, and it was not yet noon when the sentence was pronounced and executed. True it is that from our Lord's humility and silence, as Isaias says,[5] His cause was hurried through, and as He did not resist, He was condemned against right and against all the rules of justice. But wherefore do we say that He did not resist, when we know of a truth that He had more desire to suffer death than His enemies had to inflict it upon Him, and that if He had not made haste to die no human force would have availed to put Him to death? He made all this haste in accordance with what He had said many days before,[6] 'I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!' Thus much as to the time.

With respect to the Cross, it is certain that it was of rough wood, unworked and unplaned, and in nothing different from the crosses of the thieves, because when the Empress St. Helena found it, a miracle was necessary in order to distinguish it from theirs. In short, it was such as would be made for a man's dishonour and for torment. Some think that it consisted of two beams only, one traversing the other, as it is generally painted, either with a head rising above the two arms, or with none, as it is usual to paint the crosses of the two thieves, for they were all of the same workmanship. Others think[7] that a bracket or small piece of wood was nailed in addition on the outside face of the cross, on which the feet of the crucified were propped, and that to it they were nailed. It is probable that this was usually done that some relief might be afforded to the dying person, and for the greater convenience of those who crucified him. There are, however, some who say[8] that this prop was taken away from beneath the feet of our Saviour, and that in order to put Him to greater torment they nailed His feet to the

[5] liii. 7. [6] St. Luke xii. 50.
[7] Greg. Turon. l. i. *De Glor. Mart.* c. 6; Iren. l. ii. c. 42.
[8] *Vide* Salmeron, t. x. tract 35.

upright beam of the Cross, as is generally seen in paintings. I do not know whether this opinion has any other origin than in the paintings, although there are some ancient pictures in which this prop is placed beneath the feet, and with this and with the title of the Cross there come to be four different pieces to make it. Perhaps on this is based the opinion entertained by some[9] who say that the Cross was made of four different woods—that is to say, of cedar and olive, of palm and cypress. It may, however, be that the origin of this idea is founded upon some pious allegory rather than on history; because, too, the hurry and confusion was great, and might hardly allow of seeking and putting together these different kinds of wood.

There are others who say[10] that the Cross was made of one piece only; that is to say, of a rough and knotted tree, and that, hewing off all the other branches, they left only two which were upright, and to these they nailed the Hands, leaving the Head in the air, without any support, and that the title was tied to and hung between these two branches. It is to this that St. Cyprian seems to allude in a poem, *de Ligno Crucis*, which says—

Arboris hæc species uno de stipite surgit,
Et mox in geminos extendit brachia ramos.

And St. Gregory Nazianzene says—

Uno item altero ramo arboris
Dextram et sinistram extensus et fixus manus.

It is, however, very probable that these saints spoke metaphorically and allegorically when they called the Cross a tree, because in this way the contemplation of the mystery was rendered sweeter and more devout; in the first place, by representing the Saviour as fruit gathered from that tree, as the Church says in one of her hymns, where she says:—

Crux fidelis inter omnes
Arbor una nobilis,
Nulla silva talem profert,
Fronde, flore, germine.

[9] *Vide* Barrad, t. iv. l. vii. c. 3. [10] B. Birgit. l. iv. c. 10.

Secondly, because this metaphor harmonizes with the mystery so greatly lauded by the saints, that Adam having stretched forth his hand to the forbidden tree, our Saviour stretched forth His, in order to be nailed to the tree of the Cross, which the Church thus sings in a hymn—

De parentis protoplasti
Fraude factor condolens,
Quando pomi noxialis
In necem morsu ruit:
Ipse lignum tunc notavit,
Damna ligni ut solveret.

It would seem, then, that the holy Cross was made of two crossed beams, as it is ordinarily painted, and that it had a tablet above the head, on which the title was inscribed, and another on which the feet rested, unless, through an excess of cruelty, this was removed in the case of our Saviour.

There is also no doubt that our Saviour was fastened to the Cross with nails, because the very words crucified and crucifixion used by the Evangelists, signify this; and St. Thomas, after the Resurrection, stood out positively, saying,[11] 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails.' But there is some difficulty as to the number of these, some saying that there were only three, both feet being pierced by the same nail, as is ordinarily seen in pictures;[12] others hold it to be more true that the nails were four, all of one kind and size, and each foot being nailed down by its own nail to the bracket or support placed beneath them, as many ancient pictures show, and as Gregory of Tours and other authors clearly declare.

The Evangelists do not mention the crown of thorns, though it appears to be certain and is commonly believed that the soldiers, although they took off His clothes, to crucify Him, did not remove the crown from His head, and so it is

[11] St. John xx. 25.

[12] Greg. Tur. l. v. *De Glor. Mart.* 6; Cyp. *Serm. de Pass.;* B. Birgit. l. v. c. 70, l. vii. c. 15; Tertull. *Lib. contra Jud.* c. 13; B. Birgit. l. i. c. 10.

represented in all pictures, and affirmed by writers worthy of credence.

But, respecting one matter there are several different opinions, and that is as regards the manner in which our Lord was crucified.[13] For some say that He was fastened upon the Cross whilst it was lying upon the ground, that His arms and feet were stretched with great violence, and that He was then nailed upon it, and that afterwards, by means of ropes and other appliances, and with agonizing suffering to Him (indeed it could not be otherwise), they raised the Cross with the Body suspended upon it, until they had placed it upright and in the place prepared for it. Others say that they first raised the Cross,[14] and placed it firmly in its proper position (which it would have been difficult to do if our Lord had already been crucified), and that then they placed scaffolds or ladders near, for our Saviour and His executioners to ascend, and crucified Him in the sight of the people.

This second mode of meditating is more in conformity with the custom of executing any judicial sentence with publicity and solemnity, in a high and conspicuous place, whilst it also harmonizes well with the mode of speaking common to many saints, who say our Saviour ascended the Cross, and with what Holy Church says in her prayer, *Domine Jesu Christi, qui hora sexta pro redemptione munâi crucis patibulum ascendisti*, etc. And thus, as they afterwards lowered the Body from the Cross whilst it remained upright, it appears that they also placed our Lord upon it by the aid of the same steps and ladders.

There is likewise another surmise in support of this, and it is this. All the acquaintances of our Lord, and the women who had accompanied and followed Him from Galilee, placed themselves at this time at a little distance, as the Evangelists note. Amongst them were Mary Magdalene and the two

[13] Anselm, l. *De Pass. Dom.*; D. Ant. 1 p. *Hist.* tit. v. c. 6.

[14] Athan. *Serm. de Pass.*: Cyp. *Serm. de Pass.*; Anselm, l. x. *in Lucam*; Iren. l. xi. c. 2; Bonav. *in Fascic* 3, et *in Medit. Vitæ Christi*, c. 78. *Vide* P. Martin de Rio, *Serm. de Pass.*

Maries who ordinarily accompanied the Blessed Virgin ; and at this time, more than at any other, it is to be believed that she would not separate herself from them. Therefore, when they arrived at the mount, whilst our Lord was being crucified, she, as well as the others, stood at some distance, both to escape the remarks and rudenesses of the furious and maddened mob, and also in some measure to moderate their grief. But as the Blessed Virgin had come forth from her retirement at the cost of such bitter suffering, impelled by God and by her desire to see with her own eyes that which during the remainder of her life was to be ever present to her thoughts, and afford her matter for contemplation, her heart would not have let her place herself at a distance unless she could have seen from where she was that which was passing, nor would she have been able to see this had they crucified our Lord upon the ground. Thus, then, it seems that they crucified Him after the Cross had been raised, so that even those who were standing afar off could see Him. And if it were done in this manner (as seems most probable, though the Gospel does not speak certainly in this manner), then the event took place in the way we shall see in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXX.

Our Saviour is crucified between two thieves.

With all the fatigue and labour which we have seen, our Saviour arrived at Calvary, where He was to offer the sacrifice which was to appease the anger of God towards men and satisfy for the sins of the whole world. There they set down the three crosses, and there was a halt made of all the company which had come out of the city. Whilst the crosses were being planted in their places, they offered our Saviour a cup of wine prepared with myrrh, called by St. Mark,[1] *myrrhatum vinum*, and by St. Matthew,[2] wine mixed with gall; either that the myrrh was very bitter, for all that is bitter to the taste is often termed gall, or perhaps[3] because some gall was mingled with it. This drink was given to those who were condemned to die by the torment of the cross, that their senses might be numbed and deadened by the warmth and strength of the wine, and thus they might not feel at all, or feel much less, the pain they had to suffer. This act of compassion, (arranged, perhaps, by the pious women who accompanied Him, or by the officers and executioners who were accustomed to act thus towards any criminal whatsoever) was accepted by our Lord with marks of gratitude, and raising the wine to His mouth He tasted it,[4] but having perceived its bitterness with His tongue,[5] He would not drink of it, showing thereby that He did not need any succour to mitigate the pain of His torments, seeing that He was possessed of strength and will to undergo others far greater. Nor did He desire that it should be thought that the fortitude, patience, and perfection in suffering which He

[1] xv. 23. [2] xxvii. 34. [3] St. Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* l. iii.
[4] St. Matt. xxvii. 34. [5] St. Mark xv. 23.

showed on the Cross were caused by the warmth of the wine, the warmth of the love and charity of the Holy Ghost[6] with which He offered Himself to His Father in sacrifice being so much greater. Therefore, He only accepted in the wine what was bitter and painful to the taste, and refused that which afforded some relief to His body.

Our Saviour was then stripped of the whole of His garments with the same discourtesy and cruelty as had been shown Him on other occasions. They crucified Him naked, since the Evangelist says that the executioners divided His garments and cast lots for them, with the exception of the under tunic, which was woven without seam, and which He wore next His body. It cannot be doubted that our Saviour suffered greatly from the shame and exposure that He was made to undergo in so public a place, in the middle of the day, and in the presence of so great a crowd of people, and that He was more wounded by the eyes of those who looked upon Him than if they had pierced Him with the nails. The Prophets, moreover, did not keep silence respecting His feelings under this outrage, for one of them said,[7] *Ipsi vero consideraverunt me: diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea, et super vestem meam miserunt sortem*—'They have looked and stared upon Me. They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots.' It is very important to consider, says St. Ambrose,[8] in what manner our Saviour ascended the Cross, and to see that He ascended it naked; so also let him ascend it who thinks to conquer the world, so as not to receive aid nor succour from the world. Adam was conquered who sought garments with which to cover himself; Christ conquered when He stripped Himself of them, and ascended the Cross naked, in the state in which nature formed us and of which God was the author. So also the first Adam lived in Paradise, and so the second had to enter Paradise. Thus writes St. Ambrose; but although he and other saints and authors give us to understand that our Saviour was entirely naked when He ascended the Cross, it is, nevertheless, very piously believed, that seeing Him suffering

[6] Heb. ix. 14. [7] Psalm xxi. 18. [8] Lib. x. *in Luc.*

great shame from being naked, they gave Him a veil, or linen cloth, with which to gird Himself, as was revealed to St. Bridget,[9] and that He received it with great joy, and with His own hands fastened and adjusted it, not permitting any to help Him in that office, and teaching us thereby modesty and the love of purity.

The Cross was already fixed in its place, and the steps or ladder whereby to ascend it had been placed and fastened, and all being now ready, the High and Eternal Priest began to ascend, with no other ornament than a crown of thorns on His head, stripped of His clothing that He might be put to greater shame, with a large wound on His shoulders, and His body all scored with lashes and scourges. On either side of Him went up two executioners, who with one hand helped him to mount, and in the other carried the nails and hammers and other necessary instruments, all the people looking upon Him, and the Jews shouting, clamouring, and deriding Him greatly.

Our Lord ascended with His face turned towards the Cross, looking at it close with all the love and desire with which He had looked forward to it for so many years, for on it He was to recline His body, shed forth His blood, and end His life; through it He was to combat, through it to triumph, and through it to redeem the world. For if the blessed St. Andrew rejoiced when he saw his cross afar off, through love of his Master Who had died upon it, it is not wonderful that our Saviour rejoiced over His Cross, through love of His children who would die for it, and of the innumerable martyrs who would die on it, and through love and reverence for His Eternal Father, Who would be glorified by it. And we may imagine that in His Heart He uttered such words as these—'O precious Cross! O blessed wood! For three and thirty years the hope of thee has pierced My soul and drawn it to thyself! Now to day thou wilt for three hours hold in thy possession My Body nailed on thee. Glorious thou hast been for having so long inflicted a martyrdom on my thoughts.

[9] L. i. c. 15, et l. iv. c. 76.

Today thou shalt be still more glorious, making My Body suffer the martyrdom of true and not imaginary sufferings. O Cross, how different and how changed shalt thou be this day from what thou hast been until now! Before thou wast the instrument of death and the token of infamy, from today thou shalt be the tree of life and the ladder of glory. With joyful heart I come to place Myself in thine arms, that henceforth it may be known that they are to be open to all men of all sorts whatsoever who have recourse to thee. To thee will be nailed My feet and My hands, and with them the sins and the wickedness of men. On thee will My Body be crucified, and together with It will be crucified the old man,[10] that the body of sin may be destroyed. On thee will be shed My Blood, that by it the handwriting and the decree[11] against all the sons of Adam may be blotted out. O Eternal Father, acknowledge now Thy Son, Who has been brought to this ignominious and bitter strait through Thy will alone, for Thou didst desire that I should take upon Me the payment of the debt due by others! I do not ask, Lord, that Thou shouldest deliver Me from these sufferings, but that Thou shouldest pardon their sins.'

Then was represented to our Lord how beloved and reverenced that Cross was to be through love of Him, and because He went up to suffer upon it on that day. There also were represented to Him all the martyrs who, remembering the charity with which He offered Himself to death, would suffer for Him a glad and glorious martyrdom. There he beheld also all the tender feelings with which His faithful friends would feel for Him, and the tears which they would shed while contemplating His Cross. There He saw all the victories which would be obtained by Christians over their enemies, visible and invisible, by means of that Cross, and all the miracles which in virtue of that sign would be worked in ages yet to come. Finally, there offered themselves to His sight all those saints who, in their life and by their mortification and penitence, would be crucified with Him, and He saw how that Cross would become the true standard beneath which heaven would

[10] Rom. vi. 6. [11] Coloss. ii. 14.

be gained and conquered and filled with the blessed, who in honour of that day would follow and imitate Him.

With these thoughts, or with others, on which He Himself thought it better to dwell, our Lord reached the place where He was to be nailed to the Cross, and turned His face to the people who were there present and His back to the Cross, which was placed in such a manner (as St. John Damascene observes)[12] that, having His back to the Cross, it was also turned to the city of Jerusalem, so as never more to look on it with love, His face being turned towards the west, that is to say, towards the city of Rome, destined to be the chair of the true faith, the head of His Church, and the seat of the Supreme Pontiff. And thus it was that His face was turned towards the kingdom of Spain, in which His religion was so greatly to flourish.

Our Saviour, then, turned His back to the Cross and His face to the people who were there present. Thus also was His divine Mother, who beheld Him placed in this state of disgrace, naked as she had borne Him, with the signs of His past torment and of the scourges with which His whole body was scored. And as the Son was thus raised on high, in order to be nailed to the Cross, His eyes at once sought out His Mother from amidst that great multitude, both because those who are in any tribulation look towards those who love them most, and also because there was no one else there who knew Him, confessed Him, and loved Him as she did. Many times had our Lord looked upon His Mother during those three and thirty years of His life, with the love and reverence due to His Mother, and with the most intense and incomparable charity, because as God He knew the excellence of the Blessed Virgin, and rejoiced in that marvellous work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit and of Himself. In like manner that most holy Mother had many times with love and reverence looked at and adored the face and the eyes of her Son, with the most intense love as her Son, with reverence and homage as her Lord, with thankfulness and gratitude as her Redeemer, and as the Author of

[12] Lib. *De Fid. Orthod.* iv. c. 13.

all the grace which there was in her and in all men. But who can come to understand the love and gladness with which these two lights of the heaven had so often been accustomed to look on each other? And now how changed were all things when we consider the grief with which they beheld each other when the Son, in His necessity and in the midst of His public disgrace, gazed on the Mother, and the Mother never withdrew her eyes from her Son in all His travail!

Nevertheless, although their grief had swollen to an incomparable height, their love had in no degree diminished. For the Mother looked on her Son offering Himself on the Cross for her also, and more for her than for any other creature, since she had more share in that death and derived more profit from it than any other creature. Since, then, she knew so well the value of the gifts and graces which God had bestowed on her, how great must have been the compassion and love with which she looked on her Son, Who was then gaining and meriting them for her? And the Son Who so greatly loved the Church that He had delivered Himself up to the Cross for it, and shed His Blood to cleanse it and make it thereby glorious,[13] and free from spot or wrinkle or any such thing, with how great love did He then deliver Himself up for His Mother and shed for her the blood which He had received from her, burning with love for the beauty which was in her soul! Our Lord, then, full of longing for the loveliness which His Blood would produce in our souls and much more for the beauty of His beloved Mother, who was there present, of His own will and with great and measureless charity, stretched forth His arms and hands on the wood, and the executioners putting the nails into the palms, with vigorous blows nailed them to the Cross, and fastened them securely upon it. Then they took hold of His feet, and nailed each of them with its own nail, or else both together with one, and fastened them likewise to the wood. And thus the King of all ages remained, not bound with cords, but fastened with nails, His feet being broken and His hands torn, nailed with iron through His pierced limbs and hanging on the Cross by His own wounds.

[13] Eph. v. 27.

Although at the time of the nailing there would have been no cessation of the great cries and shouts, yet who can doubt but that those blows penetrated the ears of that Mother and fixed those nails sharply into her soul and heart? At first indeed His feet and hands were fastened close to the Cross, but after a time the wounds opened with the weight of the sacred Body, and, from the strain put on them to support themselves, the precious Blood began to stream more plentifully from His veins, and then those four rivers of Paradise began to flow which were to fertilize the whole earth. Let us behold, then, with devout attention, and adore this divine Blood, for it is the price of our redemption. Nor let us turn the eyes of our soul away from the Face of our Lord, which, although it ever retained the dignity and calmness of God, could not at that time but become changed and ghastly, from the pain of the wounds, the anguish of hanging on and being supported by them, and from the quantity of blood which ran from them.

O earth, which didst bear the naked body of thy Creator nailed to a Cross! O heaven, which didst shed thy light upon His nakedness and shame! since you were made by His hands, how is it you do not acknowledge the Lord Who made you, and give token of your grief? The heaven indeed did give token, for its light was darkened, and the earth, for it shook and trembled, and the rocks, for they were rent. And how felt the pious heart of the Mother who bore Him, and the virginal breasts which gave Him suck? O heart, more firmly fixed in the will of God than the rocks themselves, since under the force of such anguish it did not break! O soul, brighter and more resplendent than the sun, since under the power of such dishonour it was not obscured! O spirit, immoveable and more securely founded upon God than the whole earth upon its centre, since under the weight of so great a tempest it was not disturbed, nor gave any sign of impatience or of weakness! But it could not be that there was no change in that sacred face, because although her will was entirely subject to that of the Father, the human heart of such a Mother who had lived only in the life of her Son and who now beheld Him suffering and

dying, must certainly have suffered immense sorrow, and the blood rushing to her heart must have left her face wan and pale and deprived the whole of her body of strength. And of a truth her life would have failed altogether, if she had not been sustained and strengthened by divine power.

Then they crucified the two thieves,[14] nailing them likewise with nails to their crosses, making no difference between them and our Saviour, except that they put Him in the midst,[15] bestowing upon Him that disgraceful preference, in order to signify that He was a chief amongst thieves, their captain and head.

They placed, moreover, at the top of the Cross, by command of Pilate, a tablet, on which was written the cause of His death. This title[16] was written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that all those who at that time had come to Jerusalem, of what nation soever they were, might read and understand it. And the letters were not written, but cut and engraved on the tablet, as may be seen to this day on the portion of the title which is preserved at Rome, and in which three things may be noted. First, that although the Evangelists differ with respect to the exact words of this title, for St. Matthew says,[17] *Hic est Jesus Rex Judæorum*—'This is Jesus the King of the Jews,' while St. Mark only gives the words,[18] *Rex Judæorum*—'The King of the Jews,' and St. Luke,[19] *Hic est Rex Judæorum*—'This is the King of Jews,' it is because they were intent upon giving the meaning of the title, which is all the same whatever words they use, that is to say, that the accusation which had been brought against our Lord, and which was the cause of His death, was that He had claimed the kingdom of the Jews. For the actual words, as they are written in the title preserved in Rome, are the same as those given by St. John,[20] *Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judæorum*—'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' Secondly, it is to be observed that, although as regards the order in which the languages are set

[14] St. Mark xv. 27. [15] St. John xix. 18. [16] *Ibid.* 20.
[17] St. Matt. xxvii. 37. [18] St. Mark xv. 26. [19] St. Luke xiii. 38.
[20] St. John xix. 19.

down, St. Luke says[21] that they were written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew letters, it is because the truth of his statement did not require the exact order in which these languages were placed, but only that the inscription was written in all three of them. But St. John, who was standing very near the Cross, gives not only the number but the order, saying that the title was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Thirdly, it is to be noted that as the Hebrews read in a reverse order from the Latins, that is to say, beginning their lines from right to left, so in the title of the Cross, not only the Hebrew letters, but also the Greek and the Latin are written in the same way, the line beginning on the other hand from our way of reading, as thus—

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Pilate directed this title to be placed thus, either because it was the usual custom to put such a title over all condemned criminals (and if this were so there would be one for each of the thieves), or else, if it were not the custom, the Governor was desirous to make this distinction in the case of our Saviour. For, as He was in truth innocent, was regarded by many as a prophet, and had been condemned unjustly without a cause, as also the judge himself had protested many times that he had yielded through vain fear to give sentence, he now wished to excuse himself and to assign a reason for his conduct by means of that public writing, signifying thereby that he, being minister of Cæsar, had not condemned Him without good reason, for that He had claimed the throne, and that it was that accusation and no other which had been brought against Him. This may have been the intention of Pilate, but that of God was very different, as will be seen by what took place afterwards, and is observed by the Apostle St. John.[22]

[21] St. Luke xxiii. 38. [22] St. John xix. 19.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Jews and Gentiles insult our Saviour on the Cross.

HAVING finished their business of crucifying our Lord, the soldiers who had executed the sentence took away the ladders which they had placed against the Cross, leaving it free and unsupported, sustaining in its arms, in the sight of heaven and earth, the price of our salvation.

All the people who had come out of the city stood beholding[1] and feasting their eyes on this spectacle, and mocking and deriding Him Whom they thus saw suffer, and in truth by merely looking on Him they outraged Him, because, in a case of so great dishonour, the having many spectators makes the dishonour greater. This is one of the causes why the sun withdrew its rays, as though turning away its eyes, in order not to behold Him, and covering itself with a shadow and veil, that our Saviour might not be looked at freely, tempering in what way it could the public shame which its Creator was suffering. But the common people, as soon as they saw Him suspended on the Cross, raised their voices and their hands with shouts of derision, and uttered curses upon Him, according to what was written in the law,[2] 'He is accursed of God, who hangeth on a tree.' To this curse[3] our Lord subjected Himself, that He might free us from the eternal curse.

Then the soldiers who had crucified Him took His garments, which, according to custom, were the wages of their labour. And how great wages they were, if they had but been able to know and esteem them aright! In themselves the

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 35. [2] Deut. xxi. 23. [3] Gal. iv. 13.

garments were not very precious or of great value, for they were those of a Man Who loved poverty, and were therefore poor and common, although decent and such as were usually worn, consisting of a tunic which fitted close to the body, and was as it were a large shirt, with whatever other interior clothing every one used, and an over tunic which decently covered all the body, with a mantle or cloak which was worn over the shoulders. The soldiers then divided these garments into four portions,[4] that each of them might have a part, as St. John observes. According to this, the executioners who crucified our Lord were four in number, and, as the Evangelists give us to understand,[5] to avoid disputes among themselves, they cast lots to decide what each man should take. The tunic or under garment did not enter into this partition. It is a common tradition that the Blessed Virgin had woven it with her own hands, and had clothed her Divine Son with it when He was a Child, and that He had always worn it, and that its size had grown in proportion to His stature. This tunic[6] was without seam, and was woven from the top to the bottom with such marvellous skill, that the soldiers would not divide it for fear of spoiling the work, apart from which the material of which it was made was of little value. Nor did they want to place it in any of the four portions into which they had divided the other vestments, that they might not lose the right which each of them had to it. Therefore, they determined to cast lots for it, so that he to whom it fell might have it whole and entire. In this way, with fresh scorn, and making a sort of pleasant entertainment over the robes of the pretended King, they robbed Him even of the poor and scanty treasures which He possessed. So far did the justice executed on Him, or the injustice used to Him, go, that he was not permitted to leave even His raiment to His Mother and His friends, as pledges or mementos of His love, but was made to behold His enemies taking them before His eyes and dividing them at their own pleasure, seizing upon His property as a reward, and as payment for the injury they had done to His Person by nailing

[4] St. John xix. 23. [5] St. Mark xv. 24. [6] St. John xix. 23.

Him on the Cross. In this manner[7] the soldiers fulfilled, without knowing or understanding it, that which had been prophesied in the Psalm,[8] 'They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots.'

It was the custom among the Romans to watch the condemned upon the cross so long as any life remained in them, to prevent any one from venturing to take them down. For this cause, after having divided the garments,[9] the soldiers sat down to watch our Saviour, and they did so more willingly and with greater care and vigilance because they had been warned and instructed by the Priests and Scribes, who feared lest our Saviour should disappear, or, by means of some false miracle, come down from the Cross. They feared likewise that His friends and followers might seek to take Him down while yet alive, or that His disciples would steal away His body after He was dead, just as they feared it would be stolen after it was placed in the sepulchre. Oh, sorrowful hours and long weary time during which this cruel torment lasted! Even the strong soldiers were tired of standing; and what must that most delicate of men have felt, nailed as He was to the Cross? The Passion of our Lord lasted so long that His executioners were wearied of sustaining their own weight; how great then must have been the weariness of His sacred Arms, and what suffering that of His holy Hands, from Whose wounds hung the whole Body? And what weariness also in the Feet, which had no support but the nails by which they were pierced?

In the same way, the common people, of whom there were many then in the city, not being able to remain there the whole time, some went and others came; all of them blasphemed Him[10] with words and mocks, making insulting gestures and wagging their heads. In this way was fulfilled to the letter that which was written in the Psalms,[11] *Omnes videntes me deriserunt me; locuti sunt labiis et moverunt caput*—'All they that saw Me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head.' And,[12] *Et ego factus sum*

[7] St. Matt. xxvii. 35. [8] Psalm xxi. 19. [9] *Ibid.*
[10] St. Matt. xxvii. 39. [11] xxi. 8. [12] Psalm cviii. 25.

opprobrium illis, viderunt me, et moverunt capita sua—'And I am become a reproach to them; they saw Me, and they shaked their heads.' For what they said was,[13] 'Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days wilt rebuild it, where is now Thy power? Wherefore dost Thou not save Thyself? If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross, and we will believe Thee.'

The people believed the calumnies which the priests had published against Him, how that He had boasted that He would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, and how He had said He was the son of God, and they flung this in His face, scoffing at Him as a liar, and rejoicing to see Him suspended on a cross, because thus His impostures had been made clear and manifest; for if He had been really He Who He said He was, and had the power which He claimed to possess, how could He better show it than by freeing Himself from the torment which He was suffering? O blind people, who had no light to perceive the immense charity of Him Who was dying upon the Cross! You could not believe that He was possessed of such power because He would not use it in His own behalf, believing that if He really had it He would avail Himself of it first of all to save himself! Do you require as a sign that He was the Son of God that He should come down from the Cross, when He could give no greater or better sign that He was so than by dying upon it for the love of God and the salvation of men, and by rising again on the third day,[14] after having, like Jonas, been swallowed up by the whale, and building up again the temple of His sacred Body after you had destroyed it?

It is not without much cause that the Evangelists have left on record these blasphemies which were uttered against our Saviour during His hour of agony. For it would have hardly appeared credible, if they had not affirmed it, that in the hearts of men there could have been so much savagery and cruelty, that they would feel no compassion or sentiment of humanity for One Whom they beheld dying with so much agony and

[13] St. Matt. xxvii. 40. [14] St. Luke xi. 30.

shame, even granted that He had been their enemy, and was suffering for the most grievous crimes. For wicked men, when they are punished as criminals, have friends to encourage and console them, and all men succour and accompany them and show tokens of emotion and of grief, desiring to show that they are just in inflicting punishment, but that they are also human in feeling compassion. But of our Saviour alone it is written,[15] that he looked for one who would grieve with Him, but there was none, and for one who would comfort Him, but He found none. Instead of this, those wretched men, urged on by evil spirits from hell (for it could not be otherwise), seeing Him in such a state as that sorrow for it cleaved the rocks themselves,[16] added sorrow to His sorrows, wounding and racking Him with their tongues, and filling His Heart with gall and bitterness.

Nor were the Priests and Scribes and the elders of the people those who had least to do with this unnatural uproar, for they were there engaged in feeding the fire and putting into the mouths of the rude multitude the words and the arguments which they addressed to our Lord. For they spoke in the same way amongst themselves, and mocking said one to the other,[17] 'He saved others, and He cannot save Himself. It is clear that His power was a pretence, and His miracles all impostures, since everything failed Him when He had most need of it. Very applicable to Him is the common phrase,[18] Physician, cure Thyself! If He be the King of Israel and the promised Messias, let Him come down from the Cross in our sight, and here we are ready to receive and to believe in Him. He says that He trusts in God, let him now deliver Him and help Him, since He has recourse to God, and since He Himself has said that He is the Son of God.'

Thus spoke those arrogant priests, proving in deed that our Saviour was the true Messias, of Whom it had been prophesied that these self same insults should be offered to Him, and the self same reasoning and speeches used which were now in their mouths. For in the Psalms[19] it is written, that they were to put

[15] Psalm lxviii. 21. [16] *Ibid* 27. [17] St. Matt. xxvii. 41.
[18] St. Luke iv. 23. [19] xxi. 9.

Him to scorn, speaking with their lips and wagging their heads, saying, *Speravit in Domino, eripiat eum, salvum faciat eum, quoniam vult eum*—'He hoped in God, let Him deliver Him, let Him save Him, seeing He delighteth in Him.' And in another place,[20] *Si enim est verus Filius Dei, suscipiet illum, et liberabit eum de manibus contrariorum; contumelia et tormenta interrogemus eum.* As if to say, 'Let us make the trial upon Him of injuries and torments; for if He be truly the Son of God, He will take up His cause and deliver Him out of the hands of His enemies'. And this is what the Scribes and Pharisees said.

Oh, how mischievous is bad example when set by superiors! The people deemed these reasonings to be good because they saw that the Scribes and Pharisees approved them. And although, on account of their grave and decorous character, they spoke only one to another,[21] the others uttered them aloud, and threw them, with the utmost inhumanity, in our Saviour's face. For this is what the people who passed to and fro[22] cried out to Him—'Vah, Thou that sayest that Thou hast so much power as to be able to destroy the Temple of God, and in three days to set it up again, why dost Thou not save Thyself?' The Gentile soldiers also[23] who were guarding Him mocked Him, and coming near where He could see and hear them, said to Him—'If thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.' The self same blasphemy[24] was uttered by the two thieves who were crucified with Him, they also exclaiming —'If Thou be the Christ, deliver Thyself and deliver us also from the cross!' That adulterous and unbelieving generation had required a sign as a confirmation of all that our Lord had given during His ministry, but He was resolved to give them no other sign than that of Jonas the Prophet,[25] and to confirm His doctrine and the miracles He had worked during His life by persevering upon the Cross until His death.

[20] Wisdom ii. 18. [21] St. Mark xv. 31.
[22] St. Matt. xxvii. 40. [23] St. Luke xxiii. 26.
[24] St. Matt. xxvii. 44; St. Mark xv. 32; St. Luke xxiii. 39.
[25] St. Luke xi. 30.

But those blind priests were obstinate in their evil reasoning, and gave to the people these stones to fling at Him, and for this cause they had come out of the city. It would have been better if they had remained there, and had been ashamed, even on account of their authority alone, to be at the execution of such a sentence, or if at least they had been held back by some scruple of their feigned piety, or out of reverence for the festival of the Pasch, as on that account they had made a scruple of entering the prætorium of Pilate. And that nothing might escape their censure, they found fault with the title which Pilate had commanded should be placed upon the Cross, as being a thing which had been done without consulting them or asking their opinion, and so they said it had issued in a notable error. For He ought not, they said, to have been called *King of the Jews*, which He was not, for if He had been, He would not have deserved punishment for it, nor would they have consented that such an affront should be offered to their King, nor did they desire to have Him for King, nor that one Who lay under such imfamy should be so named. Supposing that the Governor had not paid attention to this point, the Chief Priest went to him and said—'Do not permit, sir, that there should be written on the title, *King of the Jews*, but that *He said, I am King of the Jews*.'[26] But these miserable men, by all their clamour and diligence, did nothing but serve, without knowing it, the Providence of God, Who desired to honour His Son, and to open the eyes of all so that they might carefully observe the glorious title of the Cross, to which Pilate adhered firmly, not changing a single letter, and notwithstanding what the Chief Priests said, he treated them as ignorant men, saying,[27] 'What I have written, I have written.' For our Lord willed that in all languages and nations it should be published and believed that Jesus the Nazarene was the true King of the Jews, and that He had died to redeem and sanctify His people, and that this was to be understood all over the world, and to be believed by all nations and confessed in all languages, in order that that which had been

[26] St. John xix. 21. [27] *Ibid* 22.

prophesied might be accomplished, *Dicite in nationibus, quia Dominus regnavit a ligno*—'Say among the nations that the Lord hath reigned from the wood.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

How good Christians find a pattern, remedy, and consolation in Jesus Christ crucified.

It was the height of the Wisdom of God, that after having come into the world and made Himself Man, He should choose, in order to leave it, the most infamous and painful of deaths, and should conquer His Kingdom through the wood of the Cross, forcing open violently the road to eternal rest and glory by means of insults and torments; blunting thereby the edge of the strongest and most powerful weapons of the world, giving His own people courage to tread it under foot as a beaten enemy, and taking away from them all fear even though they be placed in great straits, in the hope, by means of the same, of passing as He did, to triumph and glory.

He taught us also by this that highest reverence, obedience, and love which we owe to God above all things, being willing to part with everything, and even with life itself, when it is necessary in order to glorify Him and fulfil His commandments. And here He gives us also strength for our weakness, arming us with patience, humility, and confidence in God against all events, however adverse they may be; so that thus we are made stronger than all our enemies, despising all their power through the virtue of the Cross; not feeling their blows and strokes, which all light on temporal things, to the love of which we ought by the power of the Cross to be crucified and

dead. Here also He teaches us the path of peace,[1] and directs our steps along it, guiding us by poverty, by affronts and dishonour, and rooting out of our hearts the desire of those goods which the world esteems, and from whence spring all troubles and vexations. In this manner the Cross, which to the Jews is a scandal,[2] and which the Gentiles considered foolishness, has been to those chosen and called of God, the virtue, the strength, and the wisdom of God.

And as His Divine Majesty had decreed to manifest His greatness in the Cross, and to lead His chosen by this path, it was very meet that in like manner as in heaven He was great in Majesty, so on earth He should be great in patience; that He Himself should be the first to take up His Cross in order that we all might follow Him, and that He alone should suffer a greater lack of the goods which the world esteems, and have a greater portion of the evils which the world abhores, than any other man. Because as our Captain, He was to go before us along this new road to eternal life which He had discovered to us. Hence it came, what cannot be thought of without wonder, that in less than four and twenty hours, during which the Passion lasted, there should have rained down upon our Lord so many sufferings of every kind, with such circumstances to aggravate them that it does not seem possible that in the whole course of time any man can suffer any kind of trouble or adversity which our Saviour has not suffered in His own Person far more fully. For His poverty had reached such a point that He was without anything, since He had not even a bed in which to die, nor a piece of linen with which to cover Himself except what was given to Him as an alms; nor in the thirst and agony of death could He obtain any refreshment wherewith to alleviate His sufferings except what His enemies chose to give Him, which was gall and vinegar. Finally, St. Paul says[3] that the extremest poverty consists in only having wherewith to cover the body, and food to sustain it, without seeking anything else. But our Lord,[4] Who, being rich made Himself poor for our sakes, went still further. For He had not

[1] St. Luke i. 79. [2] 1 Cor. i. 23. [3] 1 Tim. vi. 8. [4] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

wherewith to cover Himself or to appease His thirst; and even that poor clothing which during His life He wore, He could not leave on His death to whom He would, but He saw Himself despoiled of it, and the soldiers dividing it among themselves and casting lots upon it at their pleasure.

The abandonment in which He was left by men was so great that it could be said in His person[5]—'I looked on My right hand and beheld, and there was no one that would know Me, for My acquaintance and friends fled far from Me, and held Me as an abominable thing.' And this blow and fall were so much the greater in proportion as He fell from so lofty a height, so that it may be said of Him with more truth than of Job[6]—'Thou has lifted Me up and set Me as it were upon the wind, and Thou hast mightily dashed Me.' For, after having been esteemed as a saint, reverenced as a prophet, listened to as a great master and preacher, followed by all the people with extraordinary concourse in the Temple and the synagogues, in the city and the desert, on land and on sea, having become illustrious through so many great and wonderful miracles, and having been valued and loved for the continual benefits which the people received at His hands—all this He suddenly changed for rejection, contempt, infamy, hatred, and abhorrence, as had been written of Him in their law,[7] that they hated Him without cause. Even His own countrymen had procured His death, with supreme injustice, and the Gentiles had inflicted it upon Him with supreme cruelty. The Priests and Scribes were as the leaven, by means of which the whole of the people were soured against the Lord. The princes blew and the multitude kindled such a flame that it could not be appeased by all those outrages and sufferings, nor were they content with seeing Him suspended from a cross, but, like ravening dogs, they tore Him, Whom they saw dying before them, to pieces with insults and reproaches.

The feelings of the Jews and Gentiles, great and small, being thus manifestly declared against Him, no loyalty nor firmness did He find even in His own disciples who had

[5] Psalm cxli. 5. [6] xxx. 22. [7] St. John xv. 25.

followed His school. Of His twelve chosen Apostles, one sold Him and became captain of those who went to take Him; another, whom He had made first among them all, denied Him three times, uttering many curses whilst protesting that he did not know Him; and the others forsook Him, leaving Him in the power of His enemies. O unheard of example of the inconstancy of human things, and of the constancy which ought to be maintained by the true Christian in the midst of them! What must not the blessed Heart of our Saviour have endured when He found Himself forsaken by His friends and surrounded by His enemies? He had already signified it many years before, by the Prophet who said[8]—'My Heart is become like wax, melting in the midst of My bowels.'

Only His divine Mother did not forsake Him; she alone bare Him company in His disgrace, when she could not aid or defend Him, but rather increased His sufferings intensely by her presence. His Eternal Father, Who could have done it, would not then help Him, but permitted Him to suffer with the utmost rigour, according to the pleasure of His enemies, and this our Blessed Lord felt very acutely, for His enemies cast it in His face, exclaiming—'He hoped in God, let Him deliver Him and save Him, since He says that He desires God alone.' But God was not willing then to free Him, or to give any manifestation of His goodwill towards Him, and this He lovingly lamented when He said—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

But who shall say how severely and how greatly He suffered in His honour? He felt His dishonour more keenly in proportion to the greater loftiness of His Soul, to the higher reputation and esteem He had obtained, and the greater reverence with which He had been treated. For it was when He was so highly reputed and respected by the whole people, that the priests and magistrates dishonoured Him, sending to take Him in the country outside the city with armed force, as though He were a thief, and dragging Him in bonds along the most public streets of the city with violence and clamour. And when the

[8] Psalm xxi 15.

people saw Him dragged in this way, with so much disrespect and insult, they all (as is usually the case) thought that they had been deceived in the opinion they had entertained of Him, and in their anger at having done so much honour to an impostor, they endeavoured to undo their error by heaping upon Him new inventions in the way of injuries and affronts. Hence it was that some out of the multitude offered themselves as witnesses of all the crimes which the High Priests chose to invent, and that they were able to make their charges according to their own will, full of falsities, and to bring Him so ignominously before all the judges who who were then in Jerusalem, subjecting Him to jurisdiction of every kind, and presenting Him as a criminal before all the tribunals, only to leave each of them an object of mockery and outrage.

Thus His dishonour had every imaginable characteristic of completeness. First, as regarded His own Person, for He was true God, and also, as man, so esteemed and well known.

Secondly, as regarded the persons who dishonoured Him. For the Scribes and the ancients, the Pontiffs and priests, the magistrates and the judges, were the persons most highly esteemed in learning and in religion, and of whom it was most difficult to presume either that they were ignorant of justice or that they wished to commit wrong and oppression. These were they who after much deliberation and examination into the matter in their council declared Him to be a blasphemer and an impostor, and condemned Him to be worthy of death. And all the people entreated and constrained the Governor by violence to sentence Him. Gentile soldiers, who knew not God, and the vilest and meanest of the people, were His executioners, laying their hands on Him and letting loose their tongues against Him, without any shame or courtesy. One of His own disciples sold Him, and another denied Him before His face, clearing himself of the disgrace of ever having known or been familiar with Him. If we consider well, all these circumstances aggravate His dishonour in regard of the persons who dishonoured Him.

Thirdly, His dishonour was greater on account of the crimes of which they accused Him, namely, of blasphemy against God, and at the very least of having made himself His Son and equal with Him; of being a traitor against the king, whose title and dignity He had usurped, and to whom he had forbidden that tribute should be paid; of being an impostor and a stirrer up of the people, a man who kept them in a state of tumult and excitement, gathering together a school and teaching a new and pernicious doctrine; wandering over the country, going about in villages and cities, not having any settled dwelling; also of being a wizard and an enchanter, who by means of false and seeming miracles, performed through the aid of the devil, dazzled the imagination of the people; of having offered to destroy the Temple and in three days to build it again without hands, by means of spells and enchantments; all which were crimes of the greatest and most odious kind, containing in themselves many others. All these the Priests and Scribes declared and particularized as well to the Governor Pilate as to King Herod, accusing Him with great violence, in answer to which He was silent, on which His silence was urged against Him as a sufficient proof of these most serious crimes before tribunals so unjust.

Fourthly, His dishonour was increased by the treatment inflicted on Him, full of great suffering and ignominy, for He was apprehended at night in the country and with great tumult, and He was taken through the city in bonds and disgrace. The examination of His cause was conducted with violence, one of the servants of the High Priest insulting Him with words and giving Him a buffet on the face before his master and the Council of the Priests. Again, those who that night kept guard over Him, spent the whole of it in putting Him to dishonour, for they covered His eyes and spat in His face, and buffetted Him and laughed and mocked at Him as a false and lying prophet. Then He was dragged through the streets several times, from one tribunal to another. Herod dressed Him and jested at Him as a fool, and Pilate stripped Him naked in the prætorium, putting Him to the greatest shame

in order that He might be scourged as a thief. The cohort of Gentiles worshipped Him as a mock King, thrusting a crown upon His head, whilst the Jewish people refused to receive and acknowledge Him as a real King, and, when He was put in competition with a seditious thief and a homicide, gave the murderer liberty and condemned the Author of life to be unworthy of life. They did not restrain their rage even when they saw Him naked, scourged, crowned with thorns, and demanded with loud cries in His presence and before His eyes that He should be crucified. The judge condemned Him, and the death to which He was condemned being in itself most ignominious, it was rendered still more so by His being crucified in the company of two thieves and being placed in the midst as the most unworthy of all, and by His being made to bear the infamous wood of His Cross through the city, after which they nailed Him upon it naked, in the sight of all His friends and of strangers alike. And as though this were not sufficient whilst He was in His agony, and suffering all the terrors of death, they addressed cruel words to Him, casting in His face the crimes He had not committed, and which they had imputed to Him. O thou honourer and the honour of men! what is this dishonour done to Thee for their sakes? Thou alone art worthy to be honoured and exalted throughout all ages!

The sufferings of His body were such that it may well be said of them, that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head,[9] there was no sound part, but He was all one wound[10] like a leper, no beauty or comeliness remaining in Him, no shape or form by which He could be recognized. His back laid open, and His whole body marked with scourges; His shoulders bruised with the weight of the Cross; His chest disjointed and strained by being stretched thereupon; His head pierced with thorns, weak and worn out with sleeplessness from the night of misery which He had passed; His hair plucked out; His beard torn and rooted out, and His face disfigured with buffetings; His veins emptied of blood; His mouth dry from thirst, and His tongue bitter with the taste of the gall and

[9] Isaias i. 6. [10] *Ibid* liii. 4.

vinegar; His legs and arms so stretched out that the bones might be counted; His hands and feet pierced through; His body suspended by them with nails to the wood, and His wounds opening because of its weight; His Heart afflicted and brought to the point of death by the intensity of His sorrow and anguish.

For as God had willed to suffer, He was to suffer as a God, and both in what He suffered, and also in the manner and cause of His suffering, He showed clearly that He Who was thus suffering was more than man. For though reduced to such extreme poverty, forsaken by His friends and encompassed by His enemies, so dishonoured and so cast down, He did not yield nor show any weakness, nor (He did) lose one iota of His dignity and majesty. On the contrary, He stretched forth His arms courageously, showing forth, as it were, the force of God, and sustaining the weight of that Cross which only He could sustain. Then, if we consider the cause for which He suffered, we shall find it was one which was very meet for Him, seeing that He suffered all this for justice and for truth, to defend the honour of God and to accomplish the precept imposed on Him, allowing Himself to be despoiled of possessions and of the friendship of men, of fame and honour, and safety and life, in order that He might not fail in any point of His obedience. He suffered likewise for the public good of all men, present, past, and to come, offering Himself to His Father as a true holocaust, to be burnt up by the fire of that charity with which He loved God above all love, and desired His honour above all desire, and because of the love with which He loved all men, because His Father had committed into His hands their redemption and their ransom. And so abundant was this redemption made, that although one drop of His blood would have been sufficient for the redemption of a thousand worlds, He, for the excessive love He bore us, allowed His blood to be poured out so entirely, that we might not only be sprinkled but washed in it, ourselves and our garments. Wherefore the Apostle says,[11] 'He hath loved us.

[11] Apoc. i. 5.

and washed us from our sins in His own Blood;' and in another place,[12] 'Blessed are they who wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.'

Thus our great Lover, suspended from the Cross, was providing us with a remedy, with an example, and with consolation. For it was a remedy to pay off our debts to the Eternal Father, and to satisfy the Divine Justice for our misdeeds, to enrich our poverty with the treasure of His merits, and to arm our weakness with the virtue of His Cross, in order that, He having[13] suffered Himself in His sacred Flesh, we should arm ourselves with the same thought in our temptations, and with the memory of His Passion.

It was a great consolation and example for men that our Lord allowed Himself to be tempted and tried[14] so generally in every kind of travail, that He might better know how to compassionate us in ours. And it was great wisdom and a very loving device of Providence, to have collected together in His Passion all the kinds of adversity which men on all occasions whatever, and at all times whatever, might have to undergo. It was the deed of a very faithful friend, and no less of a very courageous captain, thus to plunge Himself (as had been written of Him)[15] into the depths of the sea—*veni in altitudinem maris*—and to wait until all the waves and tempests which could be raised therein had broken themselves upon Him, as He says in another part,[16] *Et omnes fluctus tuos induxisti super me*—'All Thy waves Thou has brought in upon Me,' in order that He might leave, marked with His footsteps and His example, the royal road, through the midst of the waters—that is, through tribulation—by which His people might pass on joyfully, and His enemies, who arve the lovers of this world, might sink like lead and be drowned in the mighty waters.[17] I mean that the worldly can derive only sorrow from poverty, impatience from infirmities, and despair from dishonour. But our Lord has taught His chosen to gain riches through poverty, peace through sorrows, true honour and glory through

[12] Apoc. xxii. 14 [13] 1 Peter iv. 1. [14] Heb. iv. 15.
[15] Psalm lxviii. 3. [16] *Ibid* lxxxvii. 8. [17] Exodvs xv. 10.

dishonour, and thus by means of death He has made known to them the way of life.[18] He stretched forth His hands on the Cross, and His enemies were swallowed up and submerged beneath the earth. He was the Guide and Captain of His redeemed people, and with the strength which He derived from suffering He sustained them, and bore them upon His shoulders to the eternal dwellings of glory, according as it is written,[19] *Extendisti manum tuam et devoravit eos terra: dux fuisti in misericordia tua populo quem redemisti, et portasti eum in fortitudine tua ad habitaculum sanctum tuum*—'Thou didst stretch forth Thy hand, and the earth devoured them, Thou didst lead Thy people in mercy whom Thou hast redeemed, and bear them in Thy strength under Thy holy dwelling place

CHAPTER XXXIII.

What the sight of Jesus Christ crucified wrought on the Eternal Father.

The Eternal Father beheld this spectacle, so wonderful in every way, and so worthy of His eyes; and if we are to speak of so sublime and secret a mystery in the language of men, no words can describe the joy and exultation which He felt on beholding the great deeds wrought by His most loving Son upon the Cross, and which were all for His greater glory and the manifestation of His holiness. If a human father rejoices when he sees his son come forth armed for the combat, seated firmly upon his steed with courage and noble bearing, with nothing weak or craven in his mien, and then beholds him rout his enemies, and subdue and trample them under foot gloriously, especially if he has entered on the quarrel on

[18] Psalm xv. 11. [19] Exodus xv. 12.

account of the insults offered to his father, and in order to satisfy his honour, what must have been the complacency of the Eternal Father at the sight of His most beloved and obedient Son, to see Him so well set on the Cross, showing no sign of weakness or impatience, suffering with so much meekness, offering Himself with such charity, inspiring His opponents with terror through His courage and valour, revenging the insults offered to His Father, satisfying His honour, and making a great exhibition of the justice and mercy of God and a manifestation of His glory and sanctity?

Again, if the smoke of the ancient sacrifices, in which the flesh of animals was consumed with material fire, was accepted by God in the odour of sanctity, how acceptable to Him must this sacrifice have been, in which the Priest was His most beloved Son, true Man and true God, offering Himself on the altar of the Cross as a living and acceptable sacrifice, shedding all His Blood as the price and purification of our sins; where also His Body was consumed in the fire of suffering, and His Heart in the fire of charity? God was doubtless so satisfied with this payment, and so honoured by this sacrifice, that He began from that moment to take no pleasure in the old sacrifices of the Law, which had only pleased Him in so far as they had been the representation and shadow of this new sacrifice.

This is that sacrifice, which being offered once only, was sufficient for all men and for all ages, without there being need of any other. For by this sacrifice alone was the anger of God appeased, His justice satisfied, sins pardoned, the world reconciled, and the gifts of grace and glory earned for man. And as God promised to Noe, that when it rained abundantly he should behold His rainbow (which He had placed in the clouds in token of His friendship for man), so that the earth should not again be destroyed by water, so, much more, God beholding His Son suspended on the Cross, with His hands stretched out like a bow, takes from out the bow of His anger the arrows which He had been ready to send forth, and in place of chastisements gives embraces, more forced and conquered by

this powerful Bow, which is Christ, to shew mercy, than irritated by our sins to take vengeance for them.

For,[1] as the reason why Christ loved man is not man, but God, so likewise the reason why God has promised so many good things to man is not man himself, but Christ our Redeemer. Again, the reason why the Son loves us, is because the Father commanded Him to do so, and the reason why His Father looks on us with favour, is because His Son has entreated it and merited it. These are those supercelestial planets, by whose marvellous aspect the Church is governed, and by which all the influences of grace are sent down upon the world.

How strong are the cords of the love which God bears us! and not less strong is the hope which we have in Him. Thou lovest us, good Jesus, because Thy Father commandeth Thee, and Thy Father pardons us, because Thou dost entreat Him. Through Thy observance of His will and commandment it comes about that Thou lovest me, because Thy obedience requires it of Thee, and through His beholding Thy sufferings and Thy wounds come to me pardon and salvation, because so Thy merits require. Look one on the other ever, O Father and Son, look on one another without ceasing, because thus my salvation is secured! O look of power above nature, O aspect of Divine stars, whence proceed so certainly the rays of Divine grace! When will such a Son disobey? When will such a Father cease to regard His Son? And if the Son obeys, whom will He not love? And if the Father looks on his Son, who shall not be pardoned? Let us then with humble reverence say to Him, whilst presenting to Him His beloved Son, nailed for our sakes upon the Cross, *Protector noster aspice Deus, et respice in faciem Christi tui*—'Look upon us, God our Protector, and regard the face of Thy Christ.'

[1] M. Avila, *Trat. del Amor de Dios.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The first word which our Saviour spoke on the Cross.

JESUS AUTEM DICEBAT: PATER, DIMITTE ILLIS, NON ENIM SCIUNT QUID FACIUNT.[1]

Our Lord availed Himself of the satisfaction felt by the Eternal Father in the sacrifice offered to Him by His Son upon the Cross, in order to show favour to men, and not to the just only but to sinners, not to any indifferent persons, but to those who were actually committing a most grievous and horrible crime; and not to those alone who had compassion on Him, but those who abhorred Him without a cause, and were doing Him grievous injury and cruelly tormenting Him. For our most merciful Lord cared for the welfare of those who were doing Him evil, and burnt with thirst for the salvation of those who were thirsting for His blood, and who would not be satisfied until they had seen it all drained upon the Cross. For this cause, it was meet that while hanging thereon our Saviour should publicly pray for those who had crucified Him, that no one should be so perverse as to consider Himself excluded from the redemption purchased by His Blood, and from the power and merits of this His prayer.

Having now no member whole, excepting His tongue, which through deadly fatigue and the loss of blood was parched up and which the gall which had been given Him had left full of bitterness, our Saviour made His petition therewith, and prayed the Eternal Father that He would pardon the sinners who had brought Him to so great a strait. By this our Lord showed that the perdition of these wretched men gave Him more pain than all His bodily torments, since, caring not for

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 34.

Himself He cared for them, forgetful of Himself He had them in remembrance, and asking no alleviation or remedy for Himself, He asked it for them. For, no sooner had He been left upon the Cross in sight of all the people, His arms strained and He hanging by the three nails to the holy wood, than, caring nothing for the cruel torments He was undergoing, the first thing He did and the first care He showed, was to appease the anger of His Father, which had been kindled against the unbelieving Jews because of the immense sufferings of His most loving Son. Such, indeed, was it meet our great High Priest should be, and so burning His charity; such the sacrifice which He offered upon the altar of the Cross, and so inestimable its power, that it embraced even His enemies, and obtained pardon for the very sin committed in crucifying Him. And in order to conquer evil with good, in proportion as they multiplied and repeated their outrages He multiplied His prayer, for He must have repeated it many times, since the Evangelist who recounts it does not write only that He said these words, but that He kept on saying them. *Jesus autem dicebat: Pater, dimitte illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt*—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

Of a truth, if our Saviour was admirable in His great silence during His Passion, never attempting to defend Himself, He was not less admirable in what He now spoke to excuse His enemies. For our great Advocate represented to His Eternal Father in a few words, in favour of those sinners, all the motives which would be of any avail to obtain pardon for them, alleging their ignorance, and the merit and dignity of Him Who prayed for them. 'Father,' He said, 'for verily Thou art My true Father, and I am Thy true Son, I know the love Thou bearest Me, and Thou seest the reverence and obedience I have for Thee, since for that cause only I am hanging in agony on this Cross. It is not just that such a Father should, on such an occasion, deny any petition made to Him by His Son, and for this it is that I now desire to avail Myself of Thy name of Father, and of My title of Son, and of the Blood that I am shedding, and of the death agony in which I am. My Father, that which I

entreat of Thee is that Thou pardon them this their sin. They are taking My life away unjustly, and Thou as My Father mayest require My death at their hands, and as a just Judge Thou mayest take vengeance of them for it. But I, for My part, pardon them, and I pray and entreat of Thee that Thou likewise wilt pardon them, and, since I desire to have them as my brothers, let them be looked upon and adopted by Thee as sons. Let the value of My Blood be seen now, in the case of the very men who shed it, and now that the time hast come when Thou dost behold Thy Son hanging on a Cross, so likewise the time has come for Thee to pardon and to show mercy.

'Pardon them, O Father, since, although their sin is most grievous and horrible, after all they are blind and ignorant men, some of them carried away by passion, and others deceived, and all of them but too little attentive and considerate to know how to weigh as they ought the malice of their sin Their chiefs and priests have blinded themselves in the midst of light, and they have not desired to know the truth as to Who I was, although I proved it to them by evident signs; and not only so, but they have perverted and deceived the people, causing them to deny Me, and require and bring about My death. I suffer for them with goodwill. But if this, My Father, can in any measure diminish the injury which has been done to Thee, they have not known me to be Thy Son, all the more obedient to Thee in proportion as they are more cruel towards Me. For this, then, I entreat of Thee that Thou wilt not consider that they are killing Me, but only that I am dying for them; and since I am dying for them, let them not die because they put Me to death'—*Pater, dimitte illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt.*

He Who prayed in this manner to His Father with a loud voice, so that all might hear Him, asked the same of His Holy Mother[2] who was present near Him, speaking to her in the secret of her heart. And when she heard the prayer uttered by her Son in the agony of death, her loving heart was inexpressibly moved, and her soul was sublimely enlightened and

[2] Bonav. in *Stim. Div. Amor.*

instructed by means thereof. And although as a true mother it would have been her part to have asked for vengeance on His death, yet, knowing the will and the charity of her Son, she embraced, with all the strength imparted to her by the Holy Spirit, those perverse sinners and cruel persecutors with the love of a true mother, and joining her prayer with that of her Son, lovingly entreated the Eternal Father to pardon them. And through such mediators as these God showed mercy to many who were there present,[3] and who believed immediately in the Lord, whilst others after His death, moved by the miracles which took place,[4] were converted to God, striking their breasts, and many thousands[5] of others were converted by the preaching of the Apostles, after our Lord had ascended into heaven.

[3] Glos. ordin. in illud Isaiæ, liii. *Et pro transgressoribus rogavit.*
[4] St. Luke xxiii. 8. [5] Acts iv. 4.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The second word which our Saviour spoke on the Cross.

ET DIXIT ILLI JESUS : AMEN, DICO TIBI, HODIE MECUM ERIS IN PARADISO.[1]

Amongst those on whom the prayer of our Saviour produced an effect was one of the two thieves who were crucified with Him, and who must have been Jews by birth, since, from the blasphemy of the one and the confession of the other, it seems that they had some idea of the Kingdom of Christ and of the Messias Whom they were expecting. So it was, that to such a pass had the outrages offered to our Lord and the abandonment in which He was plunged arrived, that not only did the Chief Priests who had placed Him there and the rest of the multitude who were looking on blaspheme Him,[2] but even the very thieves themselves, fastened as they were to their crosses. So far was it that the Son of God humbled Himself for our sakes, that the thieves, vile and wretched men as they were, exposed to public infamy, and receiving the penalty due to their crimes, at the time when their own sufferings ought to have made them more compassionate, and when shame for their crimes ought to have kept them mute, were filled, even they, with a demoniacal and shameless fury, wounding Him very deeply with their insults and blasphemies.

For the one, being impatient beneath the torment which was his due, and hearing what the Chief Priests and Scribes said, that if He were the Son of God and the King of Israel, as He said, let Him come down from the Cross and save Himself, learnt from them the same blasphemy, adding moreover to it by saying that, if what He had declared were true, He ought

[1] St. Luke. xxiii. 43. [2] St. Matt. xxvii 44.

not only to free Himself but them also, since they were companions in torment. 'If Thou art the Christ,'[3] he said, 'save Thyself and us; but because Thou art not' (so he would say), 'Thou dost suffer and we likewise. For if Thou wert, what better opportunity than this couldst Thou desire to prove it by Thy works? And on whom would it be more reasonable to show Thy power than on those who suffer in Thy company? If Thy enemies have desired to do Thee dishonour by making Thee a companion of thieves in their punishment, Thou (if Thou wert what thou sayest) shouldst revenge Thyself upon them by making those thieves companions of Thy glory. But as it is our misfortune to suffer in the company of a liar and an impostor, therefore there is no alleviation or remedy for our punishment.' In this manner that thief charged our Saviour, and not his own crimes, with the torments which he was suffering, and this is what is commonly done by blasphemers, who, not considering the crimes which have brought misery upon them, audaciously complain of God because He does not set them free.

But the other thief, who, with eyes enlightened by God, was contemplating that sight, the fountain of all grace and sanctity, considering the profound patience and gentleness of the Lord Who was suffering, and the charity with which He prayed for His enemies, being also himself interiorly moved by the Divine Spirit, came to understand, not only that He was innocent, but that He was King indeed, and that, for His own glory and the confusion of His enemies, He was able to free the thieves from their torment and make them partakers of His Kingdom and of His glory, although not in the manner that the other thief, his companion, blasphemously imagined. Therefore he reproved him and corrected him even from the cross, saying[4]—'Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man—what evil hath He done?'

It was as though he had said—'It is marvellous that the blindness of the Priests and Scribes should be such as to

[3] St. Luke xxiii. 39. [4] *Ibid* 40.

prevent them from seeing the innocence of this holy Lamb, Who is suffering so unjustly, and that their passion should be so hot and their fury so outrageous that, beholding Him suffering such agony, they add to His tortures instead of pitying Him, and wound Him still more with their tongues. It is marvellous that Pilate, free as he is from passion, and being acquainted with the truth, should have permitted himself to yield to injustice. And this is a clear and evident proof that both he and they have lost all sense of shame and of the fear of God. But, after all, the Governor permitted himself to be conquered by the human fear of losing the favour and friendship of Cæsar, which he desired to preserve for his own ambitious ends. The priests, full of ambition and covetousness, have persistently followed out their design of removing from before their eyes Him Whom they looked upon as opposed to their honour and interest. Both one and the other, like people who are at ease and who are not acquainted with suffering, feel nothing for those who are in the midst of it. But worst of all, and a thing which cannot in any way be excused, is it that even thou hast no fear of God. For it is much more criminal in thee to be devoid of it, seeing that neither does the disgrace to which thou art exposed humiliate thee, nor does the pain which thou sufferest tame thee, nor the death which thou art awaiting open thine eyes. On the contrary, being, as thou art, a condemned criminal, thou showest thyself as insolent as the accusers and the judges themselves, and feelest as little compassion as though thou wert not participating in the torment, being all the time His fellow and companion in the same sentence and condemnation.'

'*Et nos quidem juste*, &c. We are justly condemned, for we receive the payment due to our sins, whereas this Man has done nothing which was not worthy of a great and holy prophet. And if it be sufficient to move the heart to see a man suffer even when he is guilty, and if thou and I, who are here for our crimes, ask of those who are men like ourselves, that at least they would show us compassion, how much greater reason there is that we men like Him, and tormented as He is

and who are guilty, whilst He is not, should feel compassion and sympathy for Him in His torments?' In this manner, our Saviour, being on the Cross, enlightened one thief in order to win him, and provided the other, that he might not be lost, with a teacher to reprove and teach him, one who might most properly do this, being, as he was, his own companion.

Then this blessed thief, after having thus acknowledged and confessed his sins, having accepted his cross with humility and patience as a deserved chastisement for them, and having reproached his companion for his blasphemy and proclaimed the innocence and sanctity of our Saviour, turned to Him, and in humble prayer said,[5] 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.' This was a modest petition and a wonderful confession, for he confessed Him as King, and believed that He would rise again, and that He was to come in glory in the majesty of His Kingdom; he also looked on Him as God, seeing that he called Him Lord, and begged Him to remember him, not for anything belonging to this present life, for he was on the point of losing it, but only that He would pardon his sins.

And if we consider the time and circumstances in which he believed and confessed these truths, the power of celestial grace is still more clearly revealed. He saw our Lord suffering like himself, and that the Priests and Scribes reviled Him even more than they reviled himself; there was, therefore, good reason that he should think that His crimes were as great, or greater, than his own. And as St. Leo says,[6] *Quæ istam fidem exhortatio persuasit? Quæ doctrina imbuit? Quis prædicator accendit? Non viderat prius acta miracula; cessaverat tunc languentium curatio, cæcorum illuminatio, vivificatio mortuorum; ea ipsa, quæ mox erant gerenda, non aderant; et tamen Dominum confitetur, et Regem, quem vidit supplicii sui esse consortem.* 'What exhortation,' says St. Leo, 'implanted this faith in him? What teaching instructed him? What preacher aroused him? He had not beheld the miracles which had been wrought at an earlier time, the curing of the sick had ceased,

[5] St. Luke xxiii. 42. [6] St. Leo, *De Pass.*

the enlightening of the blind, and the raising of the dead. The miracles which were to take place afterwards had not as yet been done, the darkening of the sun, the breaking of the rocks, and the opening of the sepulchres—yet spite of all this, he confessed as his King and his Lord Him Who was companion in his suffering.' So speaks St. Leo.

But our Lord Himself, Who since He has ascended to heaven, has revealed to so many the excellences of the Cross, revealed them to the thief whilst He was yet hanging upon it, and therefore it was he said—'Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom. It may indeed be, Lord, and I know, that although Thou art Lord of all the world, Thy Kingdom is not of this world, nor do I entreat of Thee anything belonging to this world, I being on one cross, and Thou on another, both of us being as it were already out of the world. And even if I had not merited this cross for my crimes, and if I had in my hand all the riches and possessions of the world, I would leave all freely, and would before all things choose this cross on which I am, in order to be Thy companion. I only long after and love the glory and blessedness of Thy Kingdom which Thou hast revealed to me. And if Thou, Lord, whilst Thou art in this world hast taken upon Thee so large a share in the punishment of my sins, it is not much that when I leave it I should also have some portion of the reward of Thy merits. I do not ask of Thee the highest place, nor Thy right hand or left in Thy glory, I shall consider myself as more highly favoured in that Thou hast placed me at the right hand of Thy Cross, and this gives me some little boldness to entreat of Thee that when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom, Thou wilt at least bear me in remembrance.'

Our Lord received joyfully, in the midst of the many blasphemies of the priests, this confession and witness of a thief, and inasmuch as he knew that our Lord, although He was hidden and concealed, was the true King of that people, of all men and of all ages, and so proclaimed Him and asked of Him gifts as of a King, so as a King, our Lord granted them to him, and much greater gifts than he had asked for. Rejoiced to see

already the fruit of His blood and this beginning of the conversion of sinners, this pattern also for the humble confession of true penitents, our Lord, Who besides being King was likewise High Priest, absolved the thief there on the cross, giving him a plenary indulgence for all his sins, so that on that same day he might enter into the joy of Paradise with Him. Making a throne of His Cross, and a seat of justice and authority of the wounds by which He was hanging, and of the nails by which He was fastened, He satisfied the petition of the thief with the liberality and magnificence of a King, saying to him—'Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' Such indeed was it right should the throne of His clemency be, and that thus He should despatch the petitions of sinners!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The sun is eclipsed and darkness is over all the earth.

Our Saviour had now hung upon the Cross for the space of about half an hour, naked, and exposed to public shame and insult, in the sight of heaven and earth, and beneath the light of midday, blasphemed by all those who had gathered together to the spectacle, and by the very thieves who were suffering with Him. Then it was that the Eternal Father willed to give from heaven a testimony, by means of wonderful and terrible signs, as to Who it was Who was dying thus. This was done by the manifestation of feeling on the part of the chief of created things in the world, weeping, as it were, and clothing themselves in mourning for the death of their common Lord. First, the sun, which, at the commandment of the Father,[1] rises day by day upon the good and bad alike, abominating this iniquity above

[1] St. Matt. v. 45.

all others that had ever been committed in the world, turned away its eyes and covered its face that it might not see it, and, chastising those who were the authors of it, hid its rays from them that they might not enjoy them, and clothed itself with darkness at noon, the very hour when its splendour is greatest, thereby to signify the darkness in which until then the Jews had lived and the blindness in which they were at that time, in the midst of the light of so many marvels. This obscurity likewise was a threat of wrath and punishment such as their crime merited, our Lord being about to take away from them the light of His favours and mercies, and to throw them into such affliction and trouble that they should behold (as men say) the stars at midday.

The sun, showing itself on the one hand so indignant against that Jewish rabble, who had brought about the death of our Lord, on the other hand did all it could to serve its Maker on this occasion. For it arrayed itself in mourning for His death, and covered His nakednesss with a veil of darkness; it hindered those who were gazing on Him from seeing Him, it put a bridle on the tongue of those who were blaspheming Him, it afforded matter for astonishment to the whole world, and made men seek to find the cause of so new and unusual an event. So, at the sixth hour or later, more or less,[2] that is to say, after the hour which, according to our reckoning, is midday, the moon being in opposition to the sun, and distant from it the whole width of the sky, turned swiftly back on its course and placed itself before the sun, so as to impede its light,[3] and the sun was thereby obscured and darkness covered the whole earth. What other more remarkable sign from heaven[4] could the Jews have required to remove their incredulity, when two such splendid globes, the eyes of the world and lights of the universe, underwent so new a change, so suddenly and so swiftly, and so entirely beyond the ordinary course of nature? For since an eclipse of the sun can never occur except when the moon places itself between the sun and the earth, and thus prevents its rays from shining upon the latter, such an eclipse

[2] St. Mark xv. 33; St. Luke xxiii. 44. [3] *Ibid.* 45. [4] St. Mark viii. 11

can never take place except when the sun and moon are in conjunction. And as the body of the moon is less than that of the sun and than that of the earth, therefore, when it places itself between the one and the other, it does not cover the whole of the sun nor obscure the whole of the earth. On this occasion, however, the reverse of all this took place. For the moon was full, and so in opposition, and thus it was necessary that it should return upon its path in order to place itself in front of the sun, and, although its ordinary movement is very rapid, it takes four and twenty hours to pass round the heavens. Whereas on this occasion, being in opposition to the sun, and on the contrary side of the heavens, suddenly, and with a movement swifter and more precipitate than can be imagined, it placed itself before the sun, and when there, though so much smaller a body than the sun, it entirely obscured it, and spread darkness over the whole earth.

Who then is this Lord, Who thus commands the heavens and governs their luminaries, and holds in His hands the reins by which He directs their movements? Who is this Lord, Whom the stars obey, and serve with their light, and honour Him by their darkness? Doubtless, this new marvel, by which the complicated system of the universe was disarranged and put out, could not proceed from any other cause, excepting one of the two attributed to it by the great Dionysius the Areopagite. For, before his conversion, and when he was nothing but a heathen philosopher, being at Athens at the time when our Saviour was suffering, and being astonished at this strange occurrence in the sun, and at the new movements of the moon, he said, 'Either the frame of the world is perishing, or the Creator of the universe is suffering.'

This darkness lasted from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, that is to say, the whole time that out Saviour remained alive upon the Cross. Nor was it without much reason, that on this occasion the whole earth should be darkened, for there was nothing in it worthy of being beheld, excepting only that work of the Lord, by which He was accomplishing salvation in the midst of the earth. *Deus autem Rex noster ante sæcula operatus*

est salutem in medio terræ.[5] By means of this darkness, the holy mountain became a celestial oratory, affording matter for meditation in that holy and living Crucifix suspended there. The windows of heaven closed themselves in this guise, that the just, entering like Moses into this cloud and darkness, and shutting their eyes to all visible things, might receive in their souls spiritual light, so as to see, taste, and penetrate, what in so great a mystery is invisible to the eyes of the body.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Blessed Virgin, our Lady, stands with great fortitude at the foot of the Cross.

The Blessed Virgin, our Lady, with some holy and devout women who accompanied her, and other of the disciples and followers of our Lord, followed Him to Calvary. Having arrived there,[1] they stood at some distance, yet in a place where they could see all that took place. For the tumult of the people, the crowds that were gathered together, and the fury of those who were engaged in the work, the blasphemies and insults, the exclamations and evil words which rose on all sides, prevented them from approaching any nearer. But, as soon as the sentence had been executed, and when the Innocent and the malefactors together had been suspended from their crosses, when the angry priests and furious people had vomited forth their venom, and had wearied themselves of uttering insults and blasphemies, above all when, through the fears and astonishment which the darkness had occasioned, the multitude began to become quiet and to withdraw, and so to

[5] Psalm lxxiii. 12.

[1] St. Mark xv. 40; St. Luke xxiii. 49.

give room for others to come and go, then the Blessed Virgin, seizing the occasion, and encouraged moreover by the darkness in which the sun enshrouded itself (for it would seem that it obscured itself in order to favour her virginal modesty in a place so public and open), but strengthened still more by the Holy Spirit Who guided her, approached the Cross to seek her heart, which was there nailed upon it.

There went in her company some devout and pious women, worthy of a truth to be praised and commended by the Evangelists,[2] because with manly courage they had been present at the death of our Lord, when the Apostles conquered by fear, had fled and been scattered; and because also they had come from Galilee, leaving their homes and their lands, to follow our Saviour, and serve and succour Him of their substance with everything that was requisite. Amongst them were three who were well known, either because of their diligence and constancy in serving our Lord, or because of their kindred with Him. Or, again, because some of them had sons amongst the Apostles. For these several causes they were more familiar with our Lord, and more intimate with His most holy Mother, and they afterwards accompanied our Lord to His burial,[3] and hardly when He had been laid in the sepulchre did they leave Him. These women were Mary Magdalene, sister of Lazarus and of Martha, and another Mary, the wife of Cleophas, surnamed Alpheus, whom St. John calls[4] the sister of the Blessed Virgin our Lady, either because she was truly so, or because they had married, as some think, two brothers, St. Joseph and Cleophas, the husband of this Mary who was the mother of St. James, termed the brother of our Lord[5] because of his likeness to Him, and called also James the Less,[6] because of his being younger than the other James. He was likewise named Alpheus[7] from his father. This Mary was also the mother of Joseph,[8] whom some believe to have been that just man who was afterwards proposed together with St. Mathias for the

[2] St. Matt. xxvii. 55. [3] *Ibid* 61.
[4] St. John xix. 25. [5] Gal. i. 19. [6] St. Mark xv. 40.
[7] St. Matt. x. 3 [8] St. Mark xv. 4.

Apostolate.[9] It is said, moreover, that she was the mother of Simon the Canaanite and Judas Thaddeus. According to this account, this venerable matron and sister of the Virgin had three sons Apostles, and the fourth was a just man, and on this account had the name of just given to him and was proposed as one for whom lots were to be cast for the Apostolate. All these were called brothers of our Lord,[10] on account of the near relationship which they had with Him. Together with Mary Magdalene and Mary of Cleophas, the Blessed Virgin had also as companion the wife of Zebedee,[11] the mother of St. James and of St. John the Evangelist, called Salome,[12] who also was called the sister of the Blessed Virgin. When our Lord was in Galilee, these holy and pious women followed and served Him in person and with their goods, and knowing that the time had arrived when He would have to die (as He had Himself declared), they came with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, their hearts not permitting them to be absent on such an occasion. For this cause they would not leave the Blessed Virgin, but accompanied her to that place of terrible shame, and on that day of bitterness and grief.

Stabant autem[13] *juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus et soror matris ejus, Maria Cleophæ, et Maria Magdalene*—'There stood, then, by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene,' and not only did she remain near the Cross beholding with her loving eyes the wounds of her Son, but she even stood upright. O courageous soul! O wonderful constancy of a Mother so like unto her Son! The Son was dying, and the Mother feared not death; the Son was stretched upon the Cross, and the Mother was standing close beside it; the Son suffered, and the Mother offered herself manfully to the persecutors; the Son gave His life for the salvation of the world, and the Mother was ready to give hers likewise, if it were necessary. The world was turned upside down, the earth trembled, the pillars of heaven were shaken, and the Blessed Virgin stood quiet and calm in her place. The rocks fell to

[9] Acts i. 23. [10] St. Matt. xiii. 55. [11] *Ibid* xxvii. 56.
[12] St. Mark xv. 40. [13] St. John xix. 25.

pieces, and the heart of the Mother was not broken; the winds roared, and the waves rose up to heaven, and the bark of the Blessed Virgin, guided by the Holy Spirit, proceeded on its way without swerving a point from the will of God.

Nevertheless, with all this uniformity of will, what understanding can comprehend, or what tongue declare the tears and grief, the groans and convulsions of heart which that Blessed Mother must have endured in seeing her sweetest Son suffering torments so great and immense and shameful? For the measure of her love was also the measure of her grief, and what the love of her heart was, such was also her anguish, and so, as it is impossible rightly to understand the love which the Blessed Virgin had for her Son, so also cannot be understood the agony which the sight of His sufferings occasioned her.

She loved Him as one friend loves another, because of the long intercourse and the sweet communion she had held with Him. She loved Him as a disciple loves his master, for His sublime teaching which, with so extraordinary an illumination of mind, she had received from Him. She loved Him as her Benefactor and her Lord for the many and great benefits which she had received from Him. Hence sprang the reverence with which she was wont to stand before Him, without daring to raise her eyes from the ground in His presence. Nevertheless, on this day, standing at the foot of the Cross, love constrained her to gaze on what she could not look at without the bitterest grief. She raised her eyes to behold Him, and so great was the agony which she then underwent, that as quickly as she raised them she lowered them again, that she might assuage the anguish of her heart.

She loved Him likewise as a mother loves her only son. If even wild beasts permit themselves to be cut into pieces, and are ready to face every danger in order to set free their young, what must not the natural love of such a Mother have wrought in her loving heart when she beheld such a Son in so great extremity? For all mothers naturally find some comfort in caressing and fondling those to whom they have given birth, and in defending them and resisting and doing battle with any

who attempt to hurt them, and they set themselves as a wall to receive blows and death for those to whom they have given life. What were, then thy feelings, O Lady, when by the Cross thou didst behold thy beloved Son so shamefully mal treated, and yet thou couldst not succour Him? Thou didst see Him naked, and thou couldst not cover Him; parched with thirst, and thou couldst not give him to drink; outraged, and thou couldst not defend Him; treated as a malefactor, and thou could not speak in His defence; his face spitted upon, and thou could not cleanse it; the tears running down from His eyes, and thou couldst not wipe them away, nor receive that last breath which came from His sacred breast, nor lay thy face against those beloved and familiar features, and die embracing Him.

Above all, the Blessed Virgin loved her Son as her God and her Creator, as her Redeemer and Sanctifier; and this not remissly and lukewarmly (as often happens with the love of ordinary mothers), but with all the powers given to her by the Holy Spirit, which were greater than it is possible to describe; and as little can be told or reckoned, nor are there any words in which it would be possible to express, the greatness of her love. Those only will be in some degree able to understand it who have sometimes experienced the mighty forces of charity. This love, then, Thou, O Lord, didst will to make the sword or rod which should torment this Blessed Virgin, and which, making itself master of her heart, should inflict upon it as many wounds as her Son had on His Body. The Body of Jesus Christ, her Son, was wounded with five thousand lashes; His head was pricked by so many thorns, His hands and feet pierced with nails, His hair pulled out, His face spitted upon and buffetted, His breast opened, and His bones (which might be counted) all disjointed. What must the heart of the Mother have felt who had all this before her eyes, since in that heart, love had gathered together all the martyrdoms which were dispersed over the body of her Son!

With all this, the Blessed Virgin stood firm; she stood by the Cross, and stood with marvellous courage and endurance,

for love gave her strength to bear the burthen which love itself had placed upon her, and she offered to God with burning charity and humble obedience that Son Whom she had conceived with so much delight, brought forth with so much glory, and watched and tended with so much love, Whose miracles she had witnessed with so much wonder, and to Whose words she had listened with so much joy and spiritual profit. And now she beheld Him dying, not in His bed and with honour, but sentenced and condemned as a blasphemer and a traitor, wounded from head to foot, and nailed by three nails to a tree between two thieves.

There among the executioners who had crucified Him, and who were watching Him, and amidst the uproar of the furious people who were insulting Him, the loving Mother stood, seeing and hearing all that was done and said. She honoured with her presence that infamous place, and had her portion of the Cross with her Son, she rose superior by her faith and obedience above all past ages, and was set there for the example and consolation of all who at any time have to bear their part in the Cross.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The third word which our Saviour spoke, and which He addressed to His most holy Mother and to the Apostle St. John.

CUM VIDISSET ERGO JESUS MATREM, ET DISCIPULUM STANTEM QUEM DILIGEBAT, DICIT MATRI SUÆ: MULIER, ECCE FILIUS TUUS; DEINDE DICIT DISCIPULO: ECCE MATER TUA.[1]

THE BLESSED VIRGIN being so near at hand, our Lord looked at her from the Cross, and the sight of her doubtless wounded His Heart to death. He was naked and outraged, and He saw His Mother gazing upon Him. He saw that in His present state He was a dishonour to His Mother and a sword that pierced her heart. He recalled to His remembrance all her past joys, and the honour which, because she was the Mother of such a Son, had been shown to her by all people, and now that all was changed, that He was in the state in which a man desires to hide himself from his own, and not to see or be seen by them, He found Himself raised on high in the sight of all, and His Mother close at hand. He saw her with her face all pale and wasted; He beheld the tears which fell so abundantly and heavily from her eyes, and it was impossible but that in that struggle and agony of death the heart of the compassionate Son must have been pierced at seeing the distress and agony of a Mother so beloved. And He Who wept at seeing Magdalene weep at the death of her brother, would weep also at seeing the Blessed Virgin weep over the death of her Son, and His tears would mingle with His blood, and His sobs with His last dying groans.

He felt also great consolation at seeing His Mother there at that time, and with good reason He esteemed this service of

[1] St. John xix. 26.

hers as above all past offices, springing as it did from so great faith and devotion, from so much loyal love and fortitude, so much obedience and humility, from such burning love and charity, which all those many waters could not quench, but which on the contrary, burnt all the brighter and stronger in the midst of them. *Cum vidisset ergo Jesus matrem.* Then as Jesus beheld His Mother, at the time when by means of the Cross and His own Blood He was destroying sin, conquering the Kingdom of Heaven, and gaining for His people the riches of grace and glory, He gave her with large and generous hand her share in those gifts, bestowing upon her the best and greatest portion of His merits, and raising her to the highest dignity and existence among all pure creatures. For He preserved her altogether from all sin, not only from such sins as are mortal, but likewise from those that are venial, as well as from original sin, and collected together in her all the multitude of these graces and gifts which were to be distributed through the remainder of the Church, and added much to them. He made her Queen and Empress in the Kingdom which He was gaining, and He ordained that she should be the advocate of sinners and the treasurer of all His riches.

Besides this, He desired there at once to give her thanks for her great love, and to repay her for the office she had performed, by looking at her, speaking to her, and showing His care and providence for her. For now that all things were in such a state as to invite Him not to look at them, and oblige Him to turn away His eyes from them, and His eyes themselves being darkened with the shadow of death, and closed with the blood that fell from His head, yet still feeling that His Mother was there He forced Himself to strive to look on her and opening His eyelids He forced the blood from them as well as He could, and fixed His eyes upon His Mother, who was standing before Him, and making a sign with His head to the Evangelist and beloved disciple who was in her company, He spoke from the Cross, and said to her, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and turning to the disciple He pointed out to him His Mother, saying, 'Behold thy Mother.'

Oh, wonderful piety of the Son, and new argument of the love which He had for His Mother! Although He was suspended from the Cross, working out the salvation of the world, and treating with His Eternal Father for the reconciliation and redemption of men, yet amidst all these cares He did not forget the solitude in which His Mother was left, so as to provide her with solace and society, and to give her another son in place of the Son she was about to lose. Our Lord might easily have arranged this matter after His resurrection; but it was a greater boon to show His loving care for His Mother at the time when He was dying, and He desired to honour His Mother in public, and not only in those private and secret visits which He paid her after His resurrection. It was also meet that He should leave some precious legacy to His beloved disciple, who was present at the Cross.

Therefore He desired that the Blessed Virgin should permit herself to be loved and comforted by the Evangelist in perfect confidence as by a son, and also that he should serve her and be a comfort to her as his mother, with all love, care, and reverence. Therefore He said to him, 'Behold thy Mother,' and to her, 'Behold thy son.' It was as though He had said—'I am thy natural and true Son, and thou art My true and much beloved Mother, and during all the time that has been granted to Me I have obeyed thee as a son, and shown thee love and respect as a mother. But now that through obedience to My Eternal Father I leave this present life, it is time that I cast My eye on some other who may perform this office in My stead. This shall be My beloved disciple, whom I intend to honour and enrich with this charge. Behold, Lady, that, in default of thy Son, this is the most fit gift that I can leave to thee. Consider that now at this moment I have already left thee, and thou art even now widow and desolate, forsaken and without a son, and this is the cause why I call thee his Mother, and that I do not call thee Mine, as also why I say, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple, "Behold thy Mother."'

O John, truly and indeed blessed, to whom each one of us owes a particular love and devotion, for in thy person the

Blessed Virgin looks upon us all as her children, and we all look up to her as to our Mother! Remember, our Lady, that thou art our Mother through the recommendation which thine own Son addressed to thee, in the last hours of His life, when He said to thee, 'Woman, behold thy son.' We are very joyful to have thee for our Mother, by the grant of Him Who is thy only true Son by nature, and among all the riches which He gained for us upon the Cross, we think this not the least, that making us His brethren and His members, He made us not only sons of His Father, but thy sons also. And because to have thee for their Mother was to be the only refuge of sinners in life and death, our Saviour chose to discover this treasure to us when His charity was at its greatest heat, being, as He was, about to expire, even from the Cross, when, in the person of the Evangelist, He said to us all that which each one of us ought to take as though it had been said to himself, *Ecce mater tua.* Take good heed and open thine eyes, for this is thy mother.

O true Mother, by whose means we receive, in the most burning love of thy charity, that true life which thy Son and our Redeemer has merited for us by His Blood upon the Cross! Eve cannot be said to be our mother, but rather our stepmother, she who slew her sons before she gave them birth, and who by gazing with longing and gluttony on the fruit of death which hung from the forbidden tree, made herself mother of sinners. But thou, beholding with tears and anguish the fruit of life hanging on the tree of the Cross, didst deserve to be made Mother of all the living. And whereas, in giving birth to these sons, thou wert destined to suffer such sharp and bitter sorrow, therefore He to Whom thou didst give birth with so much joy and gladness, showed thee from the Cross the children who had cost both Him and thee so much. Therefore, pointing out to thee all mankind, he said, *Mulier, ecce filius tuus,* as though He had said, 'Woman, these are the children of thy sorrow.' And to us He commands that we should look on thy agony, when He says, *Ecce mater tua,* so to bind us to the love and gratitude which we owe to such a Mother, and to remind us that we

sinners shall always find assistance in her, since she never can forget what it cost her to become a mother.

Et ex illa hora accepit eam discipulus in sua—'From that hour the disciple took her unto his own.' The Evangelist was well contented and repaid for his love and loyalty by the pledge of love which he had obtained at the foot of the Cross, and from that hour he took possession of the office committed to him by his Master, and began to perform towards the blessed and afflicted Virgin all the services of a good son towards his Mother, looking upon her as his own, and as the best and greatest part of his possessions—*Accepit eam discipulus in sua.* What, however, were the possessions which the Evangelist had, amongst which the Blessed Virgin was to be reckoned, since it is certain he had nothing of his own, seeing that he had left all to follow his Master? But our Lord, in payment for all the Apostles had left, promised them a hundred times more in this life in spiritual goods, and in the world to come life everlasting, and they looked upon nothing as their own, excepting the hope and the right which they had to this reward. The Evangelist, therefore, understood so well how to know and value our Blessed Lady that he counted her amongst his spiritual goods, regarded her as the reward of his Apostolate, and looked upon his being permitted to accompany and serve her, as a real payment and reward for having left all which in this world he hoped for and possessed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

How, while our Saviour was on the Cross, He had us all present to Him and offered Himself for us all.

Oftentimes, and with much attention and reverence, we ought to consider for how long a time and in how great torment our Redeemer remained upon the Cross. For as He had now been hanging upon it for three hours, that is to say, from the sixth to the ninth hour, it could not be but that, on account of the weight of His body, the wounds in His hands and feet should open wider. For this reason, so great was His anguish and the severity of His sufferings that, if He endeavoured to alleviate the pain in His hands, He increased the pain in His feet, by allowing the whole weight of His body to be thrown upon them, and if He tried to lighten the sufferings in His feet, by drawing up His body and sustaining the whole weight of it upon the nails in His hands, He only increased His pain in these, and tore open more widely and lacerated their wounds. But, in truth, He Who had offered Himself of His own will for us to this torment of the Cross, neither could nor would seek for any alleviation in His suffering, and besides, His weakness was so great that, even if He had desired it, His strength would have failed Him in the struggle to support Himself and find means to mitigate His sufferings. Thus that glorious King of Martyrs had given Himself over entirely to His sufferings.

It was now also, when His torment was so great that it caused the sun to be darkened, and when fear and astonishment had caused greater silence and stillness on all who were assembled there, that our High Priest made a long prayer, having all mankind present to His mind, and offering His sacrifice to the Eternal Father for us all. And let us be certain

that, although we did not behold Him in His Passion, He with His penetrating gaze and His infinite knowledge, beheld us, therein, and kept us present before Him when He was hanging on the Cross, in the same way as we are present to Him now. There it was that He suffered for us and had compassion upon us, and despoiled the prince of this world of the writing and obligation of our sins nailed it together with Himself upon the Cross, and blotted it out with His Blood, and obtained for us from God all the good thoughts and Holy inspirations and all the succours of grace which we have received at His hands.

Nor must we imagine that He prayed for men only collectively and in general, entreating that they might be pardoned, and that the gifts of grace might be bestowed upon them. It was not thus. But, being on the Cross, He had every one of us in particular present to His memory, He loved each one of us, and for each of us in particular He offered Himself, even as though each one of us had been the only one in the world. And not only this, but He saw then each of our sins, with all its attendant circumstances, just as He beholds them now when they are being committed, and they afflicted His Sacred Heart; but yet He still prayed for us to the Father, and offered His blood in payment for them.

O most blessed memory! O precious hours! in which we were present on that same Mount of Calvary, not standing afar off, nor even at the foot of the Cross, but on the Cross itself, in the very bosom of our Redeemer, wherein He embraced us with infinite charity, and offered us to His Eternal Father as His own, in order that in Him and through Him we might be accepted. O Eternal Father, Whose justice is incomprehensible! So it was Thy will, and Thy command, that Thy most innocent and most loving Son should pay our debts. Behold, our Lord and our Father, the agony He is suffering through obedience to Thee, and the so abundant payment which He offers Thee, that so Thy justice may be appeased. Cease, Lord, cease thine anger, and since the surety has been so severely punished, let us who are debtors be set free. Behold

Lord, the payment and Him Who discharges it upon this sacred mount, for He has nailed the whole account of our sins upon the Cross. Thou canst not look upon our sins without beholding them there, washed in nothing less than the blood of God, and Thou wilt there see Thyself paid as entirely as Thou Thyself canst and dost pay whatever Thou requirest.

CHAPTER XI.

The fourth word which our Saviour spoke upon the Cross.

ET CIRCA HORAM NONAM CLAMAVIT JESUS VOCE MAGNA DICENS: ELI, ELI, LAMMA SABACTHANI?[1]

For more than three hours our Saviour has been suspended from the Cross, praying God for us, and offering Himself in sacrifice for our sins. Then after so great agony and such long and fervent prayer, at the ninth hour (which would be, according to our reckoning, three o'clock in the afternoon) He cried out with a loud voice,[2] so that all heard Him, and complained that His Father had forsaken Him, repeating the words which had been written so long before by the Prophet David in His person, in order that He might utter them on this occasion. These words are the first in the twenty first Psalm, in which His Passion is treated of at great length, and with all particulars, and they are these—*Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?*

Our Saviour was there with His body wounded and His Soul afflicted, persecuted by His enemies, forsaken by His friends, and so destitute of all things that He had nothing on which He could lay His head, for He possessed nothing but the Cross, and upon that He could not recline it. All these

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 46. [2] *Ibid.*

things were great and wonderful, and it is not in the power of man to conceive that they could happen to One Who was God Himself. But what is beyond all wonder and surpasses all understanding is, that such a Son should have been forsaken by such a Father, and at a season when He was suffering so much only through obedience to Him. This was a circumstance that deserved that the Holy Spirit should reveal it to His servants the prophets, and that they should leave it written, and should proclaim it to the world, that we should hear it from the mouth of our Lord Himself, and that He should publish it from the Cross in order to rouse us to consider it with greater attention. For which cause, being now about to expire, His blood and His strength alike exhausted, by a special miracle (for without this it could not have been) He raised His voice and cried aloud so as to discover His agony and grief, and to show that He it was of whom it had been said, and in Whom was being accomplished the prophecy of the Psalm wherein are the words, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

O secret of divine justice and of divine mercy! The Just is forsaken in the midst of His sufferings that sinners might be succoured in theirs. That the just should be forsaken was extreme rigour of divine justice, and that sinners should be succoured was the supremest favour of divine mercy. For indeed it was no great thing that kingdoms for their sins should be destroyed, provinces desolated, cities burnt with fire, and the whole world drowned beneath the waters. But it was a new and unheard of thing that the Eternal Father should forsake His beloved Son, and make Him suffer so to the quick the punishment due to our sins. So much God did for our consolation, and in order that we might have a firm hope, that, the divine justice being so completely paid and satisfied, His mercy will be shed all the more copiously upon sinners.

Moreover, we have much cause for considering in what manner the Son of God could be forsaken by His Eternal Father. For that most sacred Humanity was never forsaken by the Divine Word, with which it was personally united; nor,

again, could the Eternal Word ever be separated from His Father, because being as He is one God with Him, so, by reason of this unity, He was always in His Father and His Father in Him. Nor any more was that most holy Soul deprived of the clear vision of God, which It had enjoyed from the first moment in which It was created, even though it be granted that through a particular dispensation of God, and for our healing, It felt those sorrows and that bitterness which according to ordinary laws those do not feel who have a clear vision of God. Nor, again, did there fail in Him that confidence which so obedient a Son ought to have in His Father, a Son Who, in order to fulfil His commandment, had permitted Himself to be nailed upon the Cross. It was in this confidence that calling Him, 'Father, He had but a few moments before prayed to Him for the very men who were torturing Him, when He said—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And a little while afterwards, delighting Himself in the same name, He commended His Spirit into His hands, when He said—'Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit.' It was not possible that in any of these ways the Father should forsake His Son, so loving and obedient, Who in all things had sought His glory and taken pains to fulfil all His desires and will. And this He wished to signify to us when He said,[3] *Et qui me misit, mecum est, et non reliquit me solum: quia ego quæ placita sunt ei, facio semper*—'And He Who sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him.'

Nevertheless, He forsook Him during that brief time of his Passion, as regarded the pains they inflicted upon Him and the manner in which He felt them. For, in so far as He was Man He might have been succoured in two ways, first, exteriorly, by an interference with all things from which He suffered—the thorns, the nails, and the scourges, being deprived of their power to hurt, the arms of those who were torturing Him being withered, and the tongues which were blaspheming and accusing Him being paralyzed. After this manner, we read

[3] St. John viii. 29.

that God favoured the martyrs, succouring them in the presence of their enemies with strange aids and miraculous help He took its power from the fire which surrounded them. He tamed the wild beasts to which they were delivered. He healed by night the wounds inflicted upon them by day, and in a thousand other manners declared Himself in their favour, depriving creatures of their force and virtue so that they might not harm them. In the same way, and in other new and different ways, the Eternal Father might much more have defended His Son, by sending to His aid innumerable angels, even as our Saviour said to St. Peter, who was desirous of defending Him with his sword,[4] *An putas quia non possum rogare Patrem meum, et exhibebit mihi modo plus quam duodecim legiones angelorum*— 'Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?'

It was not meet, however, as our Lord Himself declared to Pilate,[5] that His ministers and servants should do battle for Him visibly. For His Kingdom was not of this world, but was to be won and gained through the contempt of this world. On this account, and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, it was right that for that time power over Him should be given to His enemies, and that no hindrance should be placed in the way of their executing their purposes and ill will against Him. Our Lord signified this when He said to them,[6] 'This is your hour and the power of darkness,' and therefore, although at His entrance upon the Passion, when representing the feelings of His Humanity, He had entreated His Father that, if it were possible, that chalice should pass from Him without His drinking it, yet, notwithstanding, He fully understood from that moment the sentence which had been pronounced against Him, and the determined will of His Father that He should die without being succoured by Him and that His torment should not be hindered. And this sentence was carried out with all that rigour which is signified by this exclamation, when with a loud voice He cried out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 53. [5] St. John xviii. 36. [6] St. Luke xxii. 53.

He might also have been succoured, in the second place, by interior joy and consolation of soul, which, although it would not have prevented Him from suffering exterior insults and pains, would have taken from Him the anguish and grief which afflicted His Sacred Heart within. And in this respect God is accustomed so marvellously to succour His servants, that not only do they not experience any sorrow, but on the contrary they are glad and joyful, and glory when they have to suffer anything for Him. Their hearts dilate in the midst of tribulation, they are in the midst of the flames without receiving any hurt from them, they are raised above themselves and they look upon all things as beneath them, they are rich in the possession of God, and feel that nothing can make them feel want, they are so sheltered and hidden in the secret places of the countenance of God, that it seems to them as though no evil could come nigh them and that no scourge could reach their dwelling. And if the souls of the just have been frequently favoured by God after this manner, how much more greatly might the Soul of Jesus have been favoured, so as to feel no pain in His Passion, seeing that He had beheld in all its clearness the Divine Essence from the first moment of His creation! For it is certain that from this vision He received so much joy that, according to the usual law, no suffering, however great it might be, could have caused Him any pain, so that, in order that He might not be sensible of sorrow or anguish, it was not necessary to add any new joy and gladness to Him, but only not to disturb that which naturally resulted from His enjoyment of glory.

But inasmuch as our Lord God often deprives His children of this consolation and sensible protection, and permits them to experience and feel the weakness of their nature, He Himself chose also to place Himself in the same state, in order to teach us how we are to bear ourselves therein. For we should have had very little consolation in our weakness left us, if He had not felt this want of consolation in His travails, and on this account it was expedient to restrain the current of His glory, and that He should be left in the midst of His tribulations, so

that His natural forces should feel them as if He had been pure man. And how lively would be this feeling of His, and how sad this dereliction, those only know how to conceive who have sometimes been favoured by God. And these well know how to estimate the force of those words—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' From what we have said, is seen in what manner and for what causes our Lord was forsaken by His Eternal Father.

Again, it must excite great astonishment that our Lord having preserved such great silence throughout the whole course of His Passion, without once complaining or opening His mouth amidst so many charges and calumnies, amidst so many reproaches and false witnesses, amidst so many injuries and outrages, so great torments and sufferings, now, at last, as though He were wearied of suffering, and as if His patience had been worn out and exhausted, complained of this dereliction with so great force and so loud a voice, and uttered His complaint so late, when the business had gone so far as to be almost beyond the reach of remedy. For He asked what was the cause of His dereliction and Passion, when the sentence was already executed. But if we examine into this well we shall find that in these very things which appear so new and wonderful there is contained matter for our instruction and teaching.

It is certain that our Saviour suffered with so much silence and with such profound patience, that as some have erroneously thought, they might suspect of Him all that holy Job said of himself,[7] and that perchance His flesh was of brass and His strength was as the strength of a rock, which does not complain when men work it and strike it, because it has no life and no feeling. So our Saviour suffered all His pains as though His body had been of brass, and He gave no sign of feeling, and was silent under outrage, as though His Soul had been of stone. But although this silence was necessary in order to give us an example of patience, it was also much more necessary that it should be understood how much He had to suffer. For patience cannot be either very great or very exemplary where there is

[7] vi. 12.

either not very much to suffer, or no sensibility to suffering. But for a proof that the flesh of our Saviour was not of brass, it was enough to see the pallor of His face and the blood which flowed from His veins through so many cuts and wounds. And to show that His Soul was not of stone, but was keenly sensible to all the outrages and insults which were addressed to Him, that His feelings had not been deadened either by want of common human sensibility, or by the overpowering sweetness of divine consolations, but that as a man of honour and reason, and of flesh and bone, sufferings afflicted Him as much as they naturally required and deserved; therefore, as He had repressed and kept pent up within Him these feelings for so long a time, and through so many circumstances and toils, so now, that what was passing within His Heart might be known, He broke forth at the very close of His life with this groan and cry, saying—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

This same sadness of His Soul (as a thing which it imports us much to know for the consolation and joy of our own souls), our Saviour spoke of by word of mouth at His entrance into His Passion, and still more plainly did He declare it by the bloody sweat which ran down all His body. But this was in secret, and not before all the people, nor indeed all His Apostles, but only the three whom He took apart with Him in the Garden, to whom He likewise declared that the sorrow with which He was then afflicted would last until His death. And He therefore spoke to them, that they might know of it from Him, and so the whole Church might through them know of His want of all consolation, His sorrow, and that total banishment of all spiritual gladness which He suffered in the secret of His Soul throughout the whole course of His Passion. It was not fitting that He should then publish it and declare it to all, hat it might not be taken for weakness and lack of courage or as a means of moving His enemies to compassion and winning them over as if by supplication. On the contrary, when they came to take Him, He went forth courageously to the encounter, making Himself known to them, delivering Himself

up into their hands and to all the power of darkness. But when His enemies had executed their evil will upon Him and there remained nothing more for them to do or for our Saviour to suffer, then it seemed to Him that the hour had arrived to manifest His Heart, and that we should know from His own mouth that the external torments which He had suffered in His Body were not so grievous as the dereliction and desolation which He had suffered in His Soul; and therefore before He expired He uttered that loud cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

Here it is much to be noted that He did not complain either of the disciple who sold Him, or of the Apostle who denied Him, or the Chief Priests who accused Him, or the witnesses who calumniated Him, of the soldiers who scourged Him, or the Governor who condemned Him, or yet of the executioners who carried out the sentence upon Him. In general He made no complaint of the men who took part in His Passion, having experienced in His own disciples much weakness and but little loyalty, and in His enemies much hatred and cruelty. And yet did He complain of His Eternal Father, in Whom He recognized infinite love, supreme justice and goodness? But to whom, however, could He complain, except to Him in Whose love He reposed? And from whom could He ask the cause of His dereliction, except from Him Whose reasons for all that He does are ever founded on the highest justice and goodness? He taught us at the same time that in our troubles and adversities we are not to deal much with men, but very much with God, without Whose rule and providence not a sparrow falls into the net, not a leaf moves on the tree. And if our adversities and calamities are the chastisement of faults, He is the Judge Who passes sentence, although men are they who execute the sentence; and if they are the medicine for our spiritual diseases, He is the Physician Who prescribes them, although men are those who administer the remedy; if they are for our greater merit and increase of glory, He it is Who aids us in the battle and crowns us with victory. And as criminals do not appeal to the executioner, but to the judge;

as the sick do not discuss the medicines ordered for them with the nurse who attends them, but with the physician who has undertaken their cure; as soldiers do not show their wounds to the enemies with whom they are fighting, but to the prince who has to reward them; so we ought also to close our eyes to men who are the instruments and executioners of our sufferings, and open and raise them to God, Who is our Prince, our Physician, and our Judge, manifesting to Him our anguish, and laying open to Him our heart as did the Prophet who said,[8] 'They that sat in the gate spoke against me, and they that drank wine made me their song; but as for me, I directed my prayer to Thee, O God.' This our Saviour accomplished to the letter, for when He entered upon His Passion, in the secret prayer which He uttered in the Garden, He entreated His Eternal Father not to forsake Him on that occasion, but that, if it were possible, the chalice might pass from Him without His drinking it; and then, having perceived that such was not His will, and having submitted Himself with humble obedience to all that His Father had disposed and ordained for Him, to that self same Father, Whom at the beginning He had prayed that He would not forsake Him, to Him He complained before His death that He had forsaken Him.

And how did He complain, save by asking the causes thereof of His Father and His God, Who so loved Him, and yet had forsaken Him? For this was to take it for granted that, though the causes for which men are accustomed to persecute us are generally founded in hatred and an evil will, and that to inquire into them and search them out is generally the occasion of impatience and a ground for vindictiveness, the reasons which God has all spring from love and are all directed to our profit. They are such, moreover, that if we were to know them, not only should we make no complaint, but we should beg of God to place us in that tribulation. Therefore, to inquire with humility and piety into these causes is a great cause of consolation and conformity to the divine will. And this our Saviour taught us when, speaking to His Eternal

[8] Psalm lxviii. 13.

Father, He said to Him—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

He did not, however, go on further to the words which follow in the twenty first Psalm, in which is given the reason why His Father had forsaken Him when He says, *Longe a salute mea verba delictorum meorum.* That is—'I see that I am far from gaining deliverance, O Lord, and the remedy of so great evils, because of My many sins.' As if He were to say—'That Thou hast forsaken Me now, O Lord, is because I would not forsake mankind; and because I have taken upon Me the charge of their sins, Thou hast left Me overwhelmed in the midst of so many pains.' In this our Lord laid the charge of His torments upon us when He attributed them to His sins, which were ours because we consented to them, and His because He charged Himself with the payment for them. And to give us an occasion of amending in this respect, He asked with a loud voice why He was forsaken, since, as regarded Himself, there was no cause, and so He exclaimed—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

CHAPTER XLI.

The fifth word which our Saviour spoke on the Cross.

POSTEA SCIENS JESUS QUIA OMNIA CONSUMMATA SUNT, UT CONSUMMARETUR SCRIPTURA, DIXIT: SITIO.[1]

THE sorrowful words which our Saviour had uttered in so loud a voice were heard by some of them who stood near,[2] and were received with scoffs and derision. The reason was that the Saviour spoke them in Hebrew, which was His native tongue, in which to say—'My God, My God!' He had to repeat twice the word—*Eli, Eli!* Then some of those present immediately exclaimed in mockery—'Behold, this man calls upon Elias to help Him.' It was perhaps the Priests and Scribes who spoke thus, taking occasion for a jest from a similarity between the words Eli and Elias. Then the saying quickly spread amongst the soldiers of the guard who were standing there, all the more as such folk are much inclined of themselves to any jest or merriment. Moreover, from their ignorance of the language, they easily imagined that, when our Saviour exclaimed—'Eli, Eli,' He was calling upon Elias to help Him, and so, one of them running quickly, filled a sponge with vinegar,[3] and putting it upon a reed raised it to His lips, saying—'Stay, let us see if Elias come to deliver and take Him down from the Cross.'

The reason why the soldier who said these words offered our Saviour vinegar to drink is given by the Apostle St. John, who says that just at that moment our Lord declared He was athirst, saying the words—'I thirst.' Our Redeemer was so entirely master of Himself in the midst of the uproar of the people, in the torments and insults and in the agony of death,

[1] St. John xix. 28. [2] St. Matt. xxvii. 47.
[3] St. Mark xv. 36.

and so attentive to accomplish the will of His Father, that He kept before His eyes all the prophecies which had been written of Him, that all might be fulfilled and that not one should fail. And things having come to this,[4] He remarked that all things were now accomplished, and that there was nothing wanting, except that which had been written of Him in the Psalms,[5] which says, *Et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto*—'In My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.' And in order that this Scripture might be accomplished, our Lord declared that He suffered from the thirst of which the Prophet spake, and that the time had now come when vinegar should be given Him to drink; therefore He said—'I thirst.'

This thirst was no doubt bodily thirst which afflicted Him, and of which He complained. For the Agony and bloody sweat in the Garden, the sleepless night which He had passed, the different journeys He had made that day from one place to another, the terrible suffering of being suspended from the Cross, and the great quantity of blood which He had shed thereon, all these were sufficient causes why His interior should be parched and His strength gone, why His tongue should cleave to His palate, even as it had been written of Him in the twenty first Psalm,[6] *Aruit tanquam testa virtus mea, et lingua mea adhæsit faucibus meis*—'My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue hath cleaved to My jaws.' And His necessity being so great and the remedy of a cup of water so easy, He did not even ask or entreat that it should be given Him, but was contented with simply declaring what He was suffering, saying, 'I thirst,' as if He had been among friends who wished Him well, and who, on knowing that He was athirst, would immediately offer Him wherewith to refresh Himself.

O most holy Virgin! what must not thy loving heart have endured on hearing these words, and still more when thou didst behold the refreshment which His enemies offered Him, and felt that thou wert not powerful enough to give even a cup of water to thy Son when, with His dying breath, He asked so modestly for it!

[4] St. John xix. 28. [5] lxviii. 22. [6] v. 16.

Yet, what is this, my Saviour? Does that thirst pain Thee more than the Cross, seeing that Thou dost not complain of the Cross, but Thou complainest of thirst? What thirst can this be which oppresses Thee so greatly, but the desire for our salvation and our healing? As if Thou hadst clearly said to us, 'Your evils afflict Me more than My own, and I feel your sins more than all the torments of My Cross.' O Lord, if this is Thy thirst, the tears of my conversion and penitence might appease it, and yet I, more cruel than Thine enemies themselves, will not give Thee, in Thy thirst, at least this refreshment and alleviation.

But Thou, Lord, even as Thou didst thirst for my salvation, so also didst Thou thirst to suffer much for me, and therefore Thou didst not complain of the Cross, because Thy love overcame and subdued all Thy torments. But, after having drunk with so great resignation that bitter chalice to which Thou didst offer Thyself in the Garden, Thou didst thirst to drink many others if Thy Father were to decree it, and this thirst Thou didst declare openly when exclaiming, 'I thirst.' Blessed, O Lord, be Thy love, which many waters could not quench.[7] For, if we were to see a man so consumed by thirst as to lay himself in the stream of a mighty river, to receive it all into his mouth, and if, after having drunk it all and swallowed it, he should say that he was still athirst, it would cause very great wonder and astonishment. But Thy love, O Lord, was so ardent, that as was written of Thee,[8] 'Thou didst enter into the depths of the sea and the tempests overwhelmed Thee, and the waters entered in even unto Thy Soul,' and yet, notwithstanding all this, Thou didst say that Thou was athirst, and being in the midst of the sea it seemed to Thee that all its waters were insufficient to satisfy and appease Thy longing. Thy thirst, O Lord, was to suffer, therefore it was a thirst for the drink given Thee by Thine enemies, because by means of it Thy sufferings were to be increased, and it is very certain that if Thou hadst expected to receive any alleviation from them, Thou wouldst not have complained of thirst. But Thou

[7] Cant. viii. 7. [8] Psalm lxviii. 2.

knewest well what had been written of Thee, that in Thy thirst they would give Thee vinegar; therefore in order that the Scripture might be accomplished and that Thou should not spare Thyself this suffering, Thou saidst, 'I thirst.'

Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar,[9] which it was the custom to have at hand on similar occasions, in order to revive criminals therewith, if by chance they should faint under their sufferings, because vinegar, especially if mixed with hyssop, has the effect of increasing strength and restoring spirit and force to those who are fainting. Therefore, as on the one hand our Saviour had declared that He was athirst, and on the other hand, some of those who were present had begun to mock Him, saying, that he was calling on Elias, one of the soldiers who thought to keep up the joke, and to give it a more solemn character by what he did,[10] took it up and ran to give Him the vinegar. He did this under colour of giving Him to drink, so as to appease the thirst of which he complained, and to support His strength and courage till they could see whether Elias would come to set Him free. And as our Saviour was nailed on the summit of the Cross and could not drink from the vessel, the soldier took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and then fastened a bunch of hyssop on the top of a reed, he put the sponge in the midst of the hyssop, and lifted it to His mouth, that together with the vinegar He might imbibe some of the sap and substance of the hyssop, and at the same time the others who were standing by, said,[11] 'Let be, let us see if Elias will come to deliver Him.'

This is the fruit which our Lord received from His vineyard of the Synagogue, so enriched and so blessed as it was, and which instead of grapes bore sour grapes, and instead of wine gave Him vinegar to drink. This is the refreshment which was offered to our Lord in His hunger and in His thirst, in condemnation of our gluttony. This is the music with which He was entertained whilst He was eating and drinking! Nevertheless,[12] our Saviour drank the vinegar, and the meek and

[9] St. John xix. 29. [10] St. Matt. xxvii. 48. [11] *Ibid* 49.
[12] St. John xix. 30.

humble Lamb did not disdain to accept that refreshment, which, with so much cruelty and scoffing, His enemies offered to Him. He accepted it, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, and also that He might give a brighter example of His meekness and charity, and immediately that He had drunk it He said, *Consummatum est*—'It is finished.'

CHAPTER XLII.

The sixth word which our Saviour spoke on the Cross.

CUM ERGO ACCEPISSET JESUS ACETUM, DIXIT: CONSUMMATUM EST.[1]

OUR SAVIOUR had two offices in the world, that is to say, the offices of Teacher and of Redeemer, and two things were commended to Him to do by the Eternal Father, namely, to teach us and to redeem us, and both the one and the other He carried through to the end and accomplished in full perfection. Of the first He said, after having preached the last sermon to His disciples at the supper,[2] *Opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam. . . . Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus, quos dedisti mihi de mundo.* That is—'I have perfectly fulfilled and finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. . . . for I have preached and manifested Thy name to men.' Of the second our Lord also spoke when He went up to suffer,[3] *Ecce ascendimus Jerosolymam et consummabuntur omnia quæ scripta sunt per prophetas de Filio hominis*—'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished to the last letter which have been written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man.' In those words, *Consummabuntur omnia*, our Saviour then referred to what was future, and now that He was about to

[1] St. John xix. 30. [2] *Ibid.* xvii. 4, 6.
[3] St. Luke xviii. 31.

expire on the Cross, He bore witness that all things had been accomplished, and so He repeated in the past tense the same words, saying, *Consummatum est.* In like manner, as all the sufferings of our Lord which had been prophesied in the Scriptures were now accomplished to the letter, so at the same time had He carried out to the end, and given complete perfection and consummation to, His divine and sovereign designs for the glory of God and the redemption of men. All this is contained in the words *Consummatum est.*

How marvellous a symbol and a representation of all the wisdom and justice and goodness of God is this true Son of God and of the Virgin suspended upon the Cross, with this inscription *Consummatum est!* For this riddle of the Cross, so obscure to human wisdom, which was a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, was solved by those two words, in order that the elect of God might recognize in that self same Cross the power and wisdom of God, and the perfection and consummation of all things. *Consummatum est!*—'All is now completed; now have I drunk the chalice of My Passion drop by drop to the very dregs; now have all the prophecies been fulfilled, light has appeared in the darkness, and the truth of all the ancient symbols has been made manifest; now are paid all the debts of sinners, the rewards of glory for the just are purchased at their due price, and firm peace has been established between God and man; now is the strife against sin and hell over, and a glorious victory has been obtained; now has an end been put to the pilgrimage of mortal life, and now has the Kingdom and the triumph of glory been begun.' *Consummatum est!* O words full of ineffable secrets, containing in themselves the whole mystery of our redemption, words which could be said by Him alone Who could do what He said! He alone could give us such joyful tidings from the Cross, Who alone desired and was able to give us by means thereof such bountiful gifts.

That we may better understand this so great a benefit, we should place ourselves at the foot of the Cross in the presence of our Lord, and there ponder, as far as His divine grace will

help us, the greatness of the debt which our father Adam laid upon himself and upon all his descendants, in disobeying the commands which God imposed upon him. For at the same time he bound himself, for himself and his descendants, to pay the penalty due for his sin, which was so great that neither they nor he had wherewithal to discharge it. Every day, moreover, fresh debts were added to the first, and, whenever men sinned of their own freewill, they took upon themselves a new obligation, and subjected themselves to its penalty. As men who have become bankrupts for their debts and have incurred many obligations, take flight and endeavour to conceal themselves, allowing execution to be made on their property without being able to defend or protect themselves, so in like manner were all men before the Divine Majesty, Whom they had offended, fugitives and full of terror, trembling at the very name of justice, suffering every day execution on their goods, their honour, their salvation, and their life, without being ever able to pay their debts. Oh, how miserable a spectacle, and how worthy of compassion, to see man involved in so many calamities, and chastised in so many ways; suffering from all God's creatures who had been made that they might serve him, all of them executing upon him the punishment which he owed to their Lord and his! And at last, when he quitted this life, the devils were ready at hand to take his soul and to cast it into the prison of hell, to remain there until with exquisite torments it had paid the whole of the debt, and as it was impossible to pay it, so was it of necessity that the penalty and imprisonment should be eternal.

Nevertheless, our Lord, Who is rich in mercy, because of the bowels of His tender compassion, came down from heaven to satisfy our obligations, and to pay (as He Himself says in Psalm lxviii. 5) that which He had not taken. Nailed upon the Cross, He paid the Eternal Father with the price of His Blood for the debts which we owed, and having by this become Lord of all men, and we His slaves, He bestowed on us perfect liberty, graciously remitting our debts, and freely pardoning our sins. He likewise despoiled the prince of this world of

the right which he had over us,[4] discharging the obligation whereby we had subjected ourselves to him, as the account of a debt now paid, blotting it out with His blood, and nailing it to His Cross; and He did not wish to leave this mortal life without Himself giving to the world the good news of our redemption, when He said, *Consummatum est!* The business is now finished, and the debt is paid.

And this redemption was so copious, and the price paid for it so great, overwhelming, and abundant, that not only was it sufficient to pay our debts and to deliver us from hell, but also to purchase for us, at its just value, the reward of eternal blessedness. So that, although it be true[5] that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to merit the glory to come which shall be revealed in us, nevertheless the Passion of our Lord was worthy to merit this glory for all; and though our sufferings could not purchase that, yet when they are joined with the Passion of the Lamb without spot, and when they arise from the spirit of His grace, then they become a just price, and are worthy even of that glory. Therefore our Lord, when He had shed His Blood, said—'The price is now paid, and the payment is consummated and perfected.' O words full of consolation and of confidence! Poor needy man is made rich by this great mercy, and he who before trembled as a debtor at the very name of justice, and hid himself because he could not pay his debt, now claims from God, as from a just Judge,[6] the crown of justice, and appears with security before the divine tribunal, sheltered beneath those words of our Lord, 'All is paid'—*Consummatum est!*

Our Lord, again, having freely given to man that which cost Him His blood and His life, that is to say, the remission of his sins and virtue to merit the reward of glory, by this means a firm peace was established and concluded between God and men. Men by their sins had offended the Divine Majesty and provoked His anger, and, to follow their own desires, had left the obedience of their lawful Lord, and had not observed His commandments. This was a state full of misery, for whither

[4] Colos. ii. 14. [5] Rom. viii. 18. [6] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

could man flee, or how could he hide himself from God? And which of God's creatures could be his friend, since he was the enemy of the common Lord of all? And how could he be at peace with himself when God was not at peace with him? The remedy was in like manner very difficult, seeing there was no mediator to come forward to bring the parties together and obtain from God pardon for the past and for man amendment of the future. For it is hard to make a peace which shall be firm and true, unless satisfaction is made for the injuries which have been done, and unless there is a cessation of wrongs for the future. But man in himself was so poor and so weak that he had no capital wherewith to satisfy for the offences which had been committed, nor had he strength to sustain himself so as not to fall again into other sins. This, then, was the cause why peace with God was not made, and why the war with so powerful an enemy was to continue, at such cost to poor weak man that he was to have upon him the anger and indignation of God in eternal punishment.

O bowels of the divine mercy! which in a case so wretched provided for man a most abundant remedy, by giving him a mediator such as was needful between him and God, Christ Jesus, Who was true God and true Man, in Whom, as the Apostle says,[7] 'Dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,' communicating Itself to Him without limit or measure. For His sake God was willing to admit men to His friendship and to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace between heaven and earth by means of the blood which He shed upon the Cross.

Now, then, the Prince[8] and Mediator of Peace was there nailed upon the Cross, and lifted up between heaven and earth, arranging the terms which it was fit to make in order that the peace might be firm and lasting. And He did not treat with God by means of faith, as men do, but He saw Him and spoke with Him face to face, in the presence of the sovereign spirits and of all the celestial Court. There He was offering Him, on the part of man, His blood and His life in payment of their

[7] Colos. i. 9. [8] Isaias ix. 6.

debts and in satisfaction of their offences, and entreating Him with strong cries and tears[9] to pardon them and be reconciled to them. And he was heard by the Eternal Father in His prayer, as well for the sake of the superabundant payment which He offered, as for the reverence with which He prayed, and for what was due to His Person. And out of regard to Him and to this sacrifice God was reconciled with men, and offered on His side to maintain an everlasting peace and friendship with them. And the treaty being thus concluded, our Saviour said on the Cross, 'It is now paid, all is concluded and set at peace'—*Consummatum est!*

In this way, by means of the Cross, all things were consummated, and were brought to the highest point of perfection, and dying thereon our Lord became, as the Apostle says,[10] the Author and Finisher of our faith. For upon the Cross He wrought the principal mysteries which we believe, and secured those things which we hope; He took away from us the love of those things which we possess in this life, and smoothed the path that we might obtain those which we desire in glory everlasting. In this Cross[11] are to be found the substance and effect of all the promises of God, the fulfilment of all prophecies, the reality of ancient shadows, and the truth of all the figures of the law. The law[12] not being able to bring anything to its due perfection because it was full of sterile and empty ceremonies,[13] our Lord by this one oblation, consummated and perfected for ever them that were destined to be saints,[14] and summing up in one word all these things He said, *Consummatum est.* All is finished, all is fulfilled, all is perfected and consummated; now is executed all that the Eternal Wisdom has traced out; now is paid all that His rigorous justice required, and all that became God's infinite love and mercy is done in favour of man. Now is accomplished all that He promised to the Patriarchs, all that He preached by the Prophets, all that was signified and wrapped up in ancient ceremonies and figures. All is now done—all that was requisite in order to instruct our ignorance,

[9] Heb. v. 7. [10] *Ibid* xii. 2. [11] 2 Cor. i. 20. [12] Heb. vii. 19. [13] Gal. iv. 9. [14] Heb. x. 13.

to strengthen our weakness, to correct our malice; the remedy of all our ills is now consummated. Nothing is wanting of all that was meet and necessary to arouse the lukewarm and animate the fervent, to cure the sick and preserve those who are in health, all that was required for the consolation and advancement of the just and for the pardon and reconciliation of sinners; all is accomplished which was meet for the conquest of the world, for the subjecting of the flesh, and triumphing gloriously over the devil and hell. *Consummatum est!*

That He might make these words true, and conclude so glorious an enterprise, our Lord confronted with such firmness and fortitude the outrages and sufferings of His Passion, and remained for more than three hours hanging on the Cross without desiring to descend from it, for all that His enemies asked it of Him, blaspheming Him because He did not do so, and offering to believe in Him if He would come down. 'If He be the Son of God,' they said, 'let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him.' That blind and unbelieving people did not see it was not for the Son of God to leave what He had begun, and not to finish the work of redemption which He had taken on Himself without carrying it on to the end, although it were necessary that, together with it, His life itself should be ended. His life then ended and His work then ended too, and of both one and the other He said, *Consummatum est.*

He left us herein an example not to desert nor turn back from what we have once undertaken, for the greater glory and service of God, on account of difficulties, however many, which may arise, and contradictions which we may have to meet, so that it may not be said of us with reason, what is mentioned in the Gospel,[15] *Hic homo cœpit ædificare et non potuit consummare*—'This man began to build and was not able to finish, and having wasted his property carelessly, has not been able to finish his undertaking or bring it to completion, and thus he has suffered loss and received no profit.' Let us then persevere firmly on the Cross,[16] and let us by patience run on without fainting in

[15] St. Luke xiv. 30. [16] Heb. xii. 2.

the battle of faith, keeping always before our eyes the Author thereof, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who, having set before Him joy and repose, chose rather to suffer on the Cross for our redemption and example, making no account of the confusion and contempt He would therefore have to bear, and is now seated at the right hand of God. For this cause we ought frequently, as the Apostles advises us, to think[17] diligently over the example of our Lord, Who endured such opposition of sinners against Himself, that we may not be disheartened and that our souls may not fail in our trials and difficulties, seeing that we have not yet resisted unto blood, fighting against sin.

It is meet, then, that we should fight and strive[18] for justice, even to the shedding of our blood, and that we should be faithful unto death[19] if we desire to receive the crown of life; that we should not flee from the Cross, but persevere on it until the will of God is entirely accomplished in us, even as our Lord persevered until He was able to say, *Consummatum est.* The troubles which have an end cannot be very great, brief and trivial is all that passes away with time. God wills that the tribulations of His own should pass quickly and in a moment: that which at the beginning seems intolerable, if we suffer it a little while, it is over while we turn our heads. And that we should have this consolation, even from the mouth of our Saviour Himself, after He had passed through the great tempest of His sufferings and when He was about to die, before He expired He said, 'All is finished'—*Consummatum est.*

The Blessed Virgin at that moment lifted her sacred eyes to see if with these words the life of her Son had ended. And what must not her compassionate heart have endured, when gazing on His face, she recognised by its pallor and the change that had passed over it, the presence of death, which was close at hand? What must she have felt when she saw the colour fading from His face, His lips parched, His nostrils drawn, the beauty of His eyes obscured, His head bow down, and His sacred bosom heave?

[17] Heb. xii. 3. [18] Ecclus. iv. 33.
[19] Apoc. ii. 10.

O unheard of martyrdom! O most chaste eyes of Mary, guarded so long, to be her torturers on that day! The Blessed Virgin beheld Her Son torn to pieces by suffering, and she could not aid Him, she saw His body covered with wounds and she could not heal them, she saw His sacred flesh stained with blood and she could not wash it away, she saw that blood of infinite value shed upon the Cross and she could not gather it up, she saw His eyes bloodshot and deathlike with weeping and she could not bathe them, she saw Him dying of thirst and she had nothing to give Him to drink, she saw His sacred head drooping and falling and she could not hold it up, she heard a thousand blasphemies uttered against Him and she could not defend Him, she saw Him forsaken of His Father and she could not succour Him, she saw Him about to depart and she could not embrace Him, she saw Him die and she could not die with Him. And that Mother's heart was so afflicted that it seemed as if it would forsake her body, through her desire and anguish for her Son, and her soul, as if transported out of herself, was wholly united with Him upon the Cross.

And when things were in this state, suddenly she saw Him draw fresh breath, and with power and strength of chest,[20] cry out in a loud and sonorous voice, which resounded into the very depths of her soul and reanimated her failing spirits, and moved her pure and maternal heart, and she began to expect something more to pass ere her Son died, just as she was thinking that all was over. And then, paying great attention in order to gather up the last words which her Son uttered, she heard Him speaking to His Eternal Father and say to Him, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.'

[20] St. Matt. xxvii. 50.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The seventh word which our Saviour spoke on the Cross.

ET CLAMANS VOCE MAGNA JESUS AIT: PATER, IN MANUS TUAS COMMENDO SPIRITUM MEUM.[1]

To place anything in the hands of another is to put it at his good pleasure and disposition, that he may do with it as he wills. And if the thing be greatly beloved and esteemed, to place it in the hands of another is to recommend it to his truth and faithfulness, putting confidence in him, that as it has been left in his hands to do with it as he will, he may consider himself obliged to preserve it and to look after it with the greatest care and solicitude. In this manner we are wont to commit a charge to others, when we say to them, 'In your hands I place my life, or my honour, or my goods,' obliging them by such words to be so much more solicitous for our welfare, as we, for the regard and confidence we have towards them, divest ourselves of all care, and put the things that are dearest to us out of our own power and disposal, in order to remit them to and place them in theirs.

If men, then, who drink lies and malice like water, are sometimes honoured by us in this manner, and if we place so great confidence in them, how much greater reason have we to show such honour to God, confiding in Him, and putting ourselves and all that we have into His hands, since as the Prophet says,[2] 'The Lord is holy in all His works, and true and faithful in all His words?' Who has ever sought to rely on Him and has been disappointed? Who has ever drawn near to Him and been repulsed? Who has ever confided in Him and been brought to shame thereby? Or who has hoped in Him

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 46. [2] Psalm cxliv. 31.

and has found his hope to have been in vain—especially since all we have is His, and we never place anything in His hands which we have not first received from Him? Therefore it the more behoves us to humble ourselves[3] beneath the mighty hand of God, receiving as good all that He does unto us, and submitting ourselves entirely to His disposal and providence.

This confidence which we place in God is of greatest worth when we are in tribulation, and are deprived of some of the good things which we love the most, and then place in His hands what remains to us, that with that also He may do as it pleases Him; because by this we confess that He is just and holy in all that He does with us, and that when He afflicts us, then it is He loves us, that He is faithful and just in providing for our good, and that we should never attempt to escape out of His hands, even when He is laying them most heavily upon us. And if the tribulation goes so far as to reach even to death itself, we even then ought to hope in Him, and not to hide ourselves from His hand, even though we see it threaten us with a naked sword, holding it for certain that if He slay us with His hand, that death will come to be the cause of life. And in this spirit and confidence holy Job exclaimed,[4] *Etiam si occiderit me, in ipso sperabo*—'Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him.'

Now the great Teacher of men and Honourer of His Eternal Father, did not wait to teach us this doctrine from the Cross, nor to honour the Father with this sort of honour, seeing that when He entered upon His Passion, and whilst He was in the Garden, He placed in the hands of His Father His honour and His life, when He said—'Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me, but if it may not be, Father, that I drink it not, let it not be as I will, but as Thou wilt.' And having assured Himself that His Father desired that He should drink it, He received it with so much courage, that when St. Peter wished to hinder Him from taking it, He said to him—'The chalice which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?' So that in an occasion so terrible as that in which He was

[3] 1 St. Peter v. 6. [4] Job xiii. 15.

brought face to face with a death most ignominious and cruel, He placed Himself wholly in the hands of His Father, and then, after He had received such treatment from them that there was no longer any whole place in His Body, and things having gone so far that He was now about to finish His life in the public torment and shame of the Cross, not for all this did He cease to acknowledge the love of His Father, Who was treating Him with such severity, nor did He hesitate also to place in His hands His Spirit, which was on the point of leaving His Body. And so, as He had called Him Father in the Garden, when He commended to Him His honour and His life, so now, when He had lost both, He likewise called Him Father, commending His Spirit into His hands, saying, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.' Knowing for certain that He would rise again the third day, and that this glory was due to His merits, He did not, nevertheless, desire to take it with His own hands, but rather to look for it from the hands of His Father; and so He placed His Spirit in His hands as in the hands of One Who would faithfully guard the trust, and Who, at the appointed time, which was the third day, would return it to His Body with great increase of glory and immortality, and so He said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

After this manner He took possession, in the name of all the just, of the hands of God as of the place where they would find greatest security that death should not inflict any injury upon them, according to what is written,[5] *Justorum animæ in manu Dei sunt, et non tanget illos tormentum mortis*—'The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them.' And our Saviour, having thus assured us of the hands of God in which to place our souls, has set at rest the greatest of our anxieties, which is, that we do not know what will become of them after this life. For what man is there with the slightest spark of faith who does not feel some anxiety in thinking what will become of him for ever? This it ought to be which most presses upon those who are at the moment

[5] Wisdom iii. 1.

of death, when the soul is in haste to take flight, and it knows not whither it will have to go, though it knows that to whichever side it falls, there it will have to remain throughout eternity. And if in such a doubt one tries to make himself secure by relying on himself, he is overwhelmed in the ocean of the secrets of God. What can be better at such a time than to cast oneself on the mercy of God, and put the whole matter into His hands, and to say the same words which our Saviour uttered when He expired, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit'?

And the Evangelists observe that our Saviour said these words with a loud voice and cry, for St. Matthew writes,[6] *Jesus autem iterum clamans voce magna, emisit spiritum*, and St. Mark,[7] *Jesus autem emissa voce magna expiravit.* What it was that He said in such a loud voice at the moment of His death is declared by St. Luke,[8] when he says, *Et clamans voce magna Jesus ait, Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum. Et hæc dicens expiravit*—'And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

It was not without a cause that our Saviour cried out aloud, for He showed thereby the confidence and security with which He died, and the triumph which He was gaining over His enemies; for that loud voice was the voice of a Conqueror. It showed plainly that He was the Lord of Life and of death, and that He was not dying from weakness or necessity, but only through His own will; and as He was sufficiently strong to cry with so loud a voice, He would likewise have had strength to sustain and keep up His life for as long a time as He might desire. Finally, He showed by this cry, miraculous as it was and beyond all human power, that He was true God, and this was proved by what afterwards took place, for, as St. Mark says[9]—'The Centurion, who was standing over against Him, seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said, Indeed this Man was the Son of God.'

We should certainly consider very much the profound silence which our Saviour maintained during the whole of His Passion,

[6] xxvii. 50. [7] xv. 37. [8] xxiii. 46. [9] xv. 39.

amidst so many accusations and calumnies, not attempting to defend or justify Himself or to discredit the witnesses and accusers, so that even the Gentile Governor[10] before whom the cause was tried wondered exceedingly at Him, and, inspired by a better spirit, the holy prophets had also marvelled at it ages before, one of them exclaiming[11]—'This is My chosen servant, My beloved, My soul delighteth in Him. He shall not cry nor defend Himself, neither shall His voice be heard in the streets.' And in another place he says[12]—'He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.' This being so, that He was as it were dumb before men, and had scarcely uttered a word on very cogent occasions, nevertheless, during the three hours that He was hanging on the Cross He spoken seven times for our profit and our instruction. Thrice out of these seven He spoke to God, and twice with cries and a loud voice. Of the four times that He spoke to men, the first was to a great sinner (the thief), to grant him forgiveness and indulgence, the second, to two very holy persons, His most blessed Mother and the Evangelist St. John, to give them consolation; and on one of the other occasions He spoke to the bystanders, signifying the thirst which He felt, and this was as it were to speak to the Synagogue to show it the thirst for its redemption with which He was leaving this world, and to make a last proof of the vinegar which that vine had always given Him to drink; and His other word was addressed to the new Church and chosen people, to whom He gave the good news of His having finished and concluded the affair of its redemption and salvation. The three times when He spoke to God were so arranged, that one was the first of all, and another, the last, and another in the middle of the seven words; teaching us thereby that we ought to have recourse to God on all occasions, and that He ought to be the beginning, the middle, and the end of all undertakings, even of those in which we have to deal with men. And His speaking twice to His Father with a loud voice was to show the fervent affection and burning desire from which His prayers

[10] St. Matt. xxvii. 14. [11] Isaias xliii. 1; St. Matt. xii. 19. [12] Isaias liii. 7.

sprang; for the fervent desire of the soul is as a loud cry in the ears of God, even when the tongue does not move. And that He might show the overflowing affection of His Heart, our Lord prayed that last time on the Cross with a loud voice.

He gave us likewise hereby a sure pledge and a certain hope that His prayers had been heard; for what is uttered in a loud voice is heard by all, even by the deaf and by those who are afar off—how much more, then, by those who are near, and whose hearing is perfect? The Eternal Father, therefore, being so near His Son, and His ears being so attentive to all His prayers, how would He fail to hear those prayers which were uttered in so loud a voice? Our Lord knew well that His prayers, even though He made them silently, were as cries in the ears of His Father, and that He always heard them, as He says in St. John,[13] *Ego autem sciebam quia semper me audis*—'I know that Thou always hearest Me;' but in order that we might understand and take heed to it, He made this last prayer aloud. Of this, and the others, St. Paul says[14] that our Saviour, 'in the days of His mortal life, with a strong cry and with tears, offered up prayers and supplication to the Lord Who was able to save Him from death,' and that He was heard as well for the reverence with which He prayed as for what was due to His Person. Our Lord entreated His Father either that He might not taste death, if that were possible, as He prayed in the Garden, or that if it were His will that He should be delivered up to death, that He would take Him speedily out of its jaws,[15] so that His soul might not be left in hell, nor His Body see corruption—as Jonas, although he was swallowed up by the whale, yet came forth the third day safe and sound therefrom; and He was heard in this prayer, which He made with many tears and in a loud voice, as the Apostle says. Thus, then, being on the Cross in the very jaws of death and about to be swallowed up thereby, He placed His soul in the hands of the Father that on the third day He might restore it to His Body, and said with a loud voice, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.'

[13] xi. 42. [14] Heb. v. 7. [15] Psalm xv. 10.

Having spoken these words, that Lord Who is our glory,[16] and through Whom we all lift up our heads, bowed His own,[17] and gave up the ghost. The travail which our Saviour had suffered during the whole of the past night had been such, that His life would have ended long before if He, by His divine power, had not sustained it. He Himself had said,[18] 'I have power to lay down my life in death, and I have power to take it up again in resurrection, and no man can take it from Me by force, but I lay it down of My own will.' No one, indeed, could deprive Him of life by force, seeing that all the violence[19] which was employed by His enemies, when they sought after His life, was not sufficient to deprive Him of it, but that He sustained it as long as He willed to do so; that is to say, until there were fulfilled in him all the Scriptures and all the will of His Father. This being done, He said—'Now all is ended that I had to do and to suffer,' and as one whose arm is still strong, and whose strength is undiminished, He broke forth into the loud cry in which He commended His Soul into the hands of His Father. As soon as He had uttered it He gave leave to death to come to Him, composing Himself to die with all the dignity and majesty which was due to His Person; for He died on His feet like a strong man, and in order that death might not displace His head, He Himself gently bowed it upon His breast. Then the colour of death came over Him, His lips became purple, and His nostrils pinched, His whole Body quivered upon the Cross, and He gave up His Spirit into the hands of His Father, and His life and precious Blood for the redemption of all men.

His dead body remained hanging on the Cross after the Soul had left it, but still united to the Person of the Son of God. The Cross sustained on high that sacred Body which had offered Itself for us, and presented to the eyes of God the price of our salvation and the Mediator of our reconciliation; and to the eyes of men, the consolation of our sorrows, the pattern of our life, the example and model of the predestinate, the captain

[16] Psalm iii. 4 [17] St. John xix. 30. [18] *Ibid* x. 18.
[19] Psalm xxxvii. 13.

of our conflicts, the guide of our pilgrimage, the support of our hope, and the incentive and spur of our love; the terror and fear of devils, the conqueror of death and of sin, the mirror of all charity, Who, from the Cross itself as from a seat of doctrine, is ever teaching, reproving, and exhorting us, as the Apostle says of Abel,[20] 'He being dead still speaketh'—*Et defunctus adhuc loquitur.*

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of the prodigies which took place after the death of our Saviour.

All creatures were moved and all the elements quaked at the death of our Saviour, and there took place, in the sight and before the presence of that sacred Body, many miracles and wonders, so that that was now made known of which the Prophet spoke when he says,[1] *Cornua in manibus ejus, ibi abscondita est fortitudo ejus*—'Horns are in His hands, there is His strength hid,' that is, how great was the strength that there was in those outstretched arms and those nailpierced hands, and that there lay His strength, although it was hidden and concealed from the eyes of men. First, the sun, which had been miraculously obscured, by a new miracle withdrew from before itself that veil of darkness (for it only lasted[2] from the sixth hour until the ninth hour), and when our Saviour expired it was now bright day, and the sun revealed by its rays our Saviour, that Image of God, that pattern of the predestinated, and that example of all holiness, in Whose death day was renewed after darkness, since by virtue of His death[3] new light began to dawn upon those who had lived and walked in darkness and in the region of death.

[20] Heb. xi. 4.

[1] Habacuc iii. 4. [2] St. Matt. xxvii. 45. [3] Isaias ix. 2.

Day having been restored with its natural and accustomed light, and our Saviour having expired, the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, the sepulchres of the dead were opened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the dead rose, unbelievers believed, and sinners were converted. For the Centurion plainly declared that He Who had died upon the Cross was the true Son of God, and the crowd who were present at the spectacle smote their breasts and were converted. Thus, all the world mourned and celebrated the obsequies of the dead God with ceremonies which were truly meet for so sublime majesty.

The first manifestation was made in the Temple, which was renowned for its greatness and magnificence, and reverenced for its sanctity by the whole world. This Temple was the house chosen by God for His dwelling among men, where also He might listen to their prayers during the time that the Synagogue, the law, the priesthood, and the ancient sacrifices remained.

There was in it,[4] beyond the court or entrance, a place which was called Holy, and a still more secret place which was named Holy of Holies. The court was separated from the Holy Place by a great veil, which reached from the highest point down to the ground, and in like manner a second veil divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In the first tabernacle, which was called the Holy Place, beyond the first veil, were the candlesticks and the table on which were set forth the loaves of proposition, and the altar of sacrifice. Beyond the second veil, in the Holy of Holies, were the golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant, covered in every part with gold, within which there was nothing but a golden urn, filled with the manna with which God had sustained His people in the desert, and the rod of Aaron, that rod which alone amongst all those which had been offered by the princes of the twelve tribes, had blossomed[5] and borne fruit in the presence of the Lord, while the others withered, as a sign that God had chosen Aaron to be priest and had rejected the rest. There also were

[4] Heb. ix. 2. [5] Numbers xvii. 8.

the tables of stone which Moses brought from Mount Sinai, and on which the Law was written. This was what there was in the ark, and above it were the gold cherubim of glory, looking to one another and overshadowing the Propitiatory These three portions of the Temple were so arranged that the Holy Place was approached through the court, and the Holy of Holies through the Holy Place. The court was common to all, into the Holy Place the priests alone entered freely and commonly, to perform the ordinary sacrifices, but into the Holy of Holies only the High Priest entered, and that not more than once a year, and then after having shed blood and offered sacrifice for himself and for the sins and ignorances of the people.

We must know then, that, at the moment when our Saviour died, those veils which were in the Temple, and which separated the place which was called Holy from the Holy of Holies, were rent in two from the top to the bottom, and although all the other signs which took place were very great, this was the greatest and most mysterious of them all. For the hardness and blindness of the Jews might have attributed the earthquake and the darkness to natural causes, while that the veil of the Temple should be rent was a thing that could not in any way be natural, but was a miraculous sign given by the hand of God Himself, Who, with the same wisdom and providence with which he had ordained that as long as the Old Law should endure, that veil should hang before the Holy of Holies, had also decreed that it should be torn asunder at the death of His Son. So it was made clear to all that grace and holiness had forsaken that Temple, those priests, and ceremonies, and that as there now remained nothing that was holy there, it was not necessary that it should remain a covered and secret place.

That place then, which of old was sacred, now remained open and manifest before the eyes of all, and open so that every one might enter into it. Veils were no longer necessary, because the use and signification of them had ceased, nor was it requisite now to conceal truth by figures, for it had been

revealed naked upon the Cross, and laid bare to the eyes of the whole world. The Holy of Holies remained profaned, the veil which forbade any to enter into it and see it was torn, and the Ark of the Old Covenant with its Propitiatory was uncovered like any other common and ordinary thing, whilst Mount Calvary, which had before been a vile and profane place, was converted into a Holy of Holies, because it contained in itself the Ark of the New Testament, in which were inclosed all the treasures of God, and the true Propitiatory, by means of which, God was reconciling the world to Himself.

In that ark there was nothing more than a vase of manna, the rod of Aaron, and the tables of the Law, all which things were now become vain and useless. For the Law had received its fulfilment in Jesus Christ; the rod of Aaron had terminated with his priesthood, and had yielded to the Cross which had been raised on Calvary, as a sign of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ; and His sacred Body was the true manna, which has all savour of sweetness, and is the sustenance of those who are pilgrims in the desert of this life. All these shadows were dissipated by the light, and all those figures had passed into truth. The whole sum of the divine mysteries was contained in Jesus Christ, Whose design it was, not to hide but to manifest Himself, and make Himself known to all. For this He was lifted up on high, naked and stretched upon the Cross, that we might behold Him at our leisure and contemplate Him again and again.

But inasmuch as, having been raised above the earth,[6] He was to draw all to Him by the power of His love and of His richness and beauty, therefore from that time, the Synagogue remained empty, and its Temple a deserted house and without owners, its ornaments became vile and despised things, and its sacrifices and ceremonies burthensome and without profit. And that the blind Jews might not aspire to cover the ignominy of their Synagogue behind those self same veils which before had been placed there as a sign of glory and sanctity, at the very moment when our Lord died they were torn of

[6] St. John xii. 33.

themselves, and then was made manifest to all the world the little substance that remained in the things they concealed.

But above all this, the Holy of Holies, as the Apostle says,[7] signifies the kingdom of heaven, which is the secret place hidden from the eyes of mortal men, where God especially dwells. The hiding of it thus behind a veil, and that no one was able to enter it except the High Priest alone, was intended by the Holy Ghost to teach us that the path to glory was not yet open, as long as that first Tabernacle existed with all its ornaments and ceremonies.

But when Christ our Lord died,[8] Who is the High Priest of the New Testament, in whom eternal goods are promised through His death, He presented Himself before His Eternal Father, entering into the Holy of Holies of glory through a tabernacle, not like that of the Synagogue, which had been made by the hands of men, of common and ordinary materials, but another greater and more perfect, that is to say, though the heavens themselves, through which He penetrated and opened a way whereby to pass to the other side of the veil and arrive at the right hand of the Father, the most sublime and highest seat of glory.

And He did not enter by the blood of goats or of calves, but by shedding His own blood, which he offered for the redemption and cleansing from sin of the consciences of those who were to enter with Him and through Him to glory. For this it was not necessary that He should enter once every year by shedding anew the blood of animals, because He entered once only, and then left the entrance free for ever, with an eternal redemption, and by blood which was powerful enough to wash away the sins of all ages. For this cause the veil of the Temple was rent, thereby showing that the path to heaven was as free, and the entrance into it as open, as that of the Holy of Holies itself after the veil which guarded it had been torn asunder.

All these causes were there for that new and most admirable sign, and they were the source of much sweet enjoyment to

[7] Heb. ix. 8. [8] Heb. ix. 11.

those who, with pure faith and sincere devotion, believed in the Crucified and recognised and adored His power. But for the unbelieving and obstinate Jews it was a sign of great fear and of the wrath and indignation of God, when they saw that His Temple, in which they gloried as in the house of God, manifested grief for the death of our Lord, and its abomination of their impiety and blasphemy, and so despoiled itself of its ancient ornaments, and tore, as it were, with so much vehemence, its own vesture.

Whilst this was passing within the Temple, there took place outside a terrible and unusual earthquake,[9] from which it came to pass that many great rocks were rent and split, and the earth trembled, acknowledging the presence and the majesty of its Creator, Who had triumphed so gloriously over His enemies, much more than when the Egyptians had been drowned and God had delivered his chosen people from slavery, and had led them through the desert to the promised land, free and victorious. For then the earth quaked and acknowledged the presence of God, and did Him reverence by trembling before Him, as is written in the Psalms:[10] *Deus cum egredereris in conspectu populi tui, cum pertransires in deserto, terra mota est*—'When Thou, O God, didst go forth in the sight of Thy people, when Thou didst pass through the desert, the earth trembled and was moved out of its place.' And in another place it is said: *Montes exsultastis sicut arietes, et colles sicut agni ovium. A facie Domini mota est terra; a facie Dei Jacob*—'The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like lambs of the flocks. At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob.' But if the earth gave signs of recognition when God was delivering His people from temporal slavery, and guiding them through the desert to another country, with how much greater reason would it manifest this feeling and recognition, when our Lord was upon the Cross! The earth quaked and the rocks were rent, and thus this element of the earth acknowledged the presence of its Maker, Who was triumphing gloriously over sin, over hell, and

[9] St. Matt. xxvii. [10] Psalm lxvii. 8. [11] *Ibid* cxiii. 6.

over death. And having redeemed His people from the slavery of the devil, He was leading them[12] in His mercy and sustaining them by His strength along the desert path of the Cross, until He should bring them in secure and perpetual freedom to the heavenly habitations.

The earth trembled, likewise, to celebrate after its manner and by this token, the obsequies of its Maker, and being the heaviest of created things and the lowest and grossest of the elements, it showed its feeling and gave what signs of grief were in its power. And the hard rocks condemned the hardness and obstinacy of the Jews, since they were broken and rent asunder, while they were not willing to be moved to compassion and penitence.

The earth trembled, moreover, as a token and proof that hell was trembling beneath it and death which keeps its spoils inclosed therein. Death trembled when it saw itself so close to life; and having dared to do battle with our Lord, when it saw Him close, was amazed and affrighted, and having thought to swallow Him up and devour Him like other men, it was itself devoured and swallowed up in that infinite ocean of life, as says the Apostle,[13] *Absorpta est mors in victoria*—'Death is swallowed up and undone by so disastrous a victory.'

Our Lord, indeed, made such sport of death, that when it thought to make a prey of Him, it became His prey, and He raised it up with Himself to the summit of the Cross, to cast it headlong thence, and break it in pieces for ever, as is written in Isaias,[14] *Præcipitavit mortem in sempiternum*—'He will cast down death headlong for ever.' That is to say, that on this mountain our Saviour was to hurl down death for ever. In this way, then, death came to die, and it was not possible that it should die of any other wound except from the embrace of life. Thus was fulfilled in the person of our Saviour what Osee had prophesied,[15] *Ero mors, tua o mors*—'O death, I will be thy death!'

And now death, as one conquered, in token of its submission, delivered to our Saviour the keys of its fortresses and treasures,

[12] Exodus xv. 13. [13] 1 Cor. xv. 54. [14] xxv. 8. [15] xiii. 14.

and our Lord, because He had died and had risen alive and with glory from His sepulchre, was endowed with power over all the dead, and with the keys of their graves to free them from their prison whenever He so willed it. This He declares to His beloved disciple,[16] when He says, *Ego sum primus, et novissimus, et vivus, et fui mortuus; et ecce sum vivens in sæcula sæculorum, et habeo claves mortis et inferni*—'I am the first and the last, and am alive and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.' By virtue of this power all men will rise again on the last day, and to give some evidence of this, when our Saviour rose again, many others of the saints rose with Him and came into the holy city of Jerusalem and discovered themselves and appeared unto many.[17] And although this resurrection of the saints did not take place until our Lord rose, nevertheless at His death there took place a great miracle. For at the moment that He expired death trembled at having attacked Him, and looking upon itself hereafter as conquered, yielded up possession of the tombs, which opened to give room for Life to enter through their gates, and the dead who were therein were left at the disposal of our Lord to raise them to the light of this life, whenever it should suit Him to do so.

Hell likewise trembled, together with the princes of darkness who presided in it. For as the Apostle says,[18] 'The Lord took out of their hands the handwriting of the condemnation which they had against men, nailing it with Him to the Cross, and blotting it out with His Blood, paying therewith completely for all sins.' With this He despoiled the princes and powers of hell of the prisoners whom they retained, the holy Fathers, and of the right which they had over all sinners, if these by faith and works of penance avail themselves of this redemption, and left them mocked and dismayed at this so memorable victory and most glorious triumph. So that when our Saviour descended personally into the kingdom of hell to gather these spoils which He had gained by His death, all the dwellers therein bent the knee to Him and did Him profound reverence. From

[16] Apoc. i. 18. [17] St. Matt. xxvii. 53. [18] Colos. ii. 14.

that time the sign of the Cross has been fearful and terrible to demons, because it is the figure of Christ our Lord crucified, and because by it we were redeemed, and through it they were conquered and humiliated. On this Cross the executioners stretched out His arms, and thereby revealed more clearly their greatness and power, because it was then that they were mighty and powerful[19] when so stretched out on the Cross. 'Then were the Princes of Edom troubled, and trembling seized on the stout men of Moab, and the inhabitants of Canaan fell down prostrate.' *Irruat super eos formido et pavor, in magnitudine brachii tui*—'Let fear and dread fall upon them, O Lord, in the greatness of Thine arm.'

His enemies being thus conquered, the empire of the Crucified began to extend itself and to destroy the kingdom of sin. Faith, justice, and holiness began to flourish in the souls of men, because at the splendour of the Cross the darkness of their understandings began to vanish and the hardness of their hearts to melt. The Gentiles being those who had the least knowledge of God, and soldiers being those who have usually less piety and devotion, in order that the efficacy of the Passion and Blood of our Lord might be more clearly revealed, the first among the multitude who were present who believed in Him and confessed Him after His death, were soldiers and Gentiles. Thus was accomplished that which the Apostle says[20] —'That through the blood of Jesus Christ those, who some time were afar off, were made nigh in Christ Jesus.' And as, at the birth of our Saviour, when the Jews persecuted Him and Herod sought after Him to put Him to death, then the Gentiles who came from the East acknowledged and adored Him and offered Him gifts, so likewise now at His death, when the vile Jewish nation blasphemed Him, the Gentiles honoured and glorified Him. For the Centurion (for so the man was called who commanded a hundred soldiers) who was standing[21] over against Him, and who had seen and observed all that had taken place, that is, how at the moment of His death He had cried out with a loud and firm voice, and with so much freedom

[19] Exodus xv. 15. [20] Eph. ii. 13. [21] St. Mark xv. 39.

had called God His Father, even after having been accused and condemned to death for having done so, and how with so much confidence He had commended His Spirit into His hands—considering all these things, and seeing the wonderful signs which had taken place after His death,[22] he glorified God, and making a public confession of his faith, said that—'Indeed this was a just Man,'[23] and that not only was He a just Man, but 'He was indeed the Son of God.'

The soldiers of the guard likewise,[24] who with the Centurion were keeping watch over the body of our Lord, having seen the earthquake, and the other things which took place, were filled with fear on account of the outrages they had committed and the blasphemies they also had uttered against Him. And giving thanks to God, and submitting themselves to Him with devout reverence and religious fear, they confessed the truth which they now knew, saying—'Indeed this was the Son of God.' Not only, however, did the fruits of the Passion of Christ reach the Gentiles, but the Jews also, who having, before His death, blasphemed Him in common with the Gentiles, so now after His death equally confessed Him. The Gentiles freely confessed that He was a just Man and the Son of God, and the Jews, who had had a greater share in the horrible crime of His death, abhorring their sin and being moved to repentance[25] at the sight of such a spectacle as this, mute and with their heads bowed down, returned to the city, striking their breasts.

[22] St. Luke xxiii. 47. [23] St. Mark xv. 39. [24] St. Matt. xxvii. 54. [25] St. Luke xxiii. 48.

CHAPTER XLV.

A soldier opens the side of our Saviour after His death.

With all this the Chief Priests remained still hardened in their disbelief and obstinacy, and sought out new ways of insulting and outraging our Saviour in His burial, even as they had done in His death, covering all with the cloak of religion and sanctity. There was a law in Deuteronomy by which[1] God commanded that when a man for his crime had been condemned to death, and hanged on a gibbet, his dead body should not remain on the tree, but should be buried the same day. And the law gives the reason—*Quia maledictus a Deo est qui pendet in ligno; et nequaquam contaminabis terram tuam quam Dominus Deus tuus dederit tibi in possessionem*—'For he is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree, and it is not meet that the land which the Lord thy God has given thee should be contaminated by the sight of a dead body.' Our Lord subjected Himself[2] to this curse, which was due to our sins, that we might receive the benediction due to His virtues. The priests then desired to fulfil this law by burying Him the same day. Another reason was alleged by them in addition to this, that the day following was a Sabbath,[3] and a very great and solemn Sabbath day, on account of its being also one of the days of the Pasch, and the people who had come from a distance to the festival were detained in the city, and could not go on their journey to their homes, so that on this Sabbath day the concourse was greater than usual.

This Sabbath day, then, being so solemn, it was not meet that the bodies should remain hanging on the Crosses on that day, as the festival might have been disturbed, and even, as

[1] Deut. xxi. 22. [2] Gal. ii. 13. [3] St. John xix. 31.

they thought, defiled by the sight of those malefactors, and the minds of the people diverted from the purport of the solemnity by the presence of those dead bodies, and they would take occasion to talk about the matter each according to his own liking and opinion. Now as the concourse of people was great, the opinions held by them different, and the signs which had followed upon the death of our Lord so wonderful—and as a great part of those who had been present were seized with compunction, and the Centurion and his soldiers had openly confessed that He was a just Man and the Son of God—all these things were fresh cause for rage and fury to the Chief Priests, and tended to their shame and confusion, and they feared lest some uproar should break out amongst the people, and that thus a fire might be kindled which it would not be afterwards in their power to reduce and bring low. And they could find no better means to prevent these evils than to remove from the eyes of the people the body of our Lord, and to bury it, in order to bury His memory together with it, so that no one might remember or speak of Him any more.

For these reasons, and not to do Him honour, they began to treat about His burial even before they thought He was dead. And to cover their iniquity, according to their wont, with a mask of holiness and religion, they went to the Governor and besought him that, on account of the festival and its being their Sabbath, he would command the legs of the crucified to be broken and their bodies to be buried. It was the custom to inflict this torture of breaking the legs upon executed criminals, whenever, because the death of the cross being very tedious, they desired to bring about death sooner, and so free the officers of justice from the attendance they were obliged to give.

But in desiring that this should be done in the case of our Saviour, they did Him injury and insult in many ways. First, because they insisted upon treating His cause and that of the two thieves as one and the same, by asking for Him and for them the same kind of torment and of burial. It is certain that the having Him crucified between the two thieves was

but the overflowing of their malice to dishonour our Lord, as well as to persuade the people that the manner in which they were treating Him was as just as the manner in which they were treating the thieves. But to persevere in this intent was manifest obstinacy and pertinacity. The signs that had taken place had been so terrible, and all were persuaded that God had decreed them to do honour to His Son thereby and to publish His innocence ; and it did not enter the minds of any that these wonders had been performed for the sake of the thieves who suffered together with Him. The High Priests alone closed their eyes in unbelief to all that the people saw, and, without desiring to do reverence to Him to Whom all the creatures and the elements paid homage, they went to Pilate and presented to him a petition which included in common all three who had been crucified, asking *ut frangerentur eorum crura, et tollerentur*—'that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.' Moreover, this fresh torture by which they desired to put an end to the life of our Saviour, was very great, and equally great was the outrage inflicted thereby upon Him in leaving Him with His bones broken and His body terribly lacerated ; a thing never done excepting with the vilest criminals, and of such a nature that our Lord, having subjected Himself to all kinds of torture and illtreatment, would not permit this to be done to His dead body, but, on the contrary, He had distinctly forbidden and provided against it in the sacrifice of the lamb, the express symbol of His death, when He said,[4] *Os non comminuetis ex eo*—'You shall not break a bone of him.'

This prophecy and decree of our Lord, declared so many years before on that solemn ceremony, was accomplished in spite of His enemies who asked for the contrary. Although they had been able to crucify Him with the thieves, they had not been able to keep life in Him and prevent Him from dying before them. Our Lord died when He willed it, and forestalled the diligence of the High Priests by His death, so that when the soldiers came to execute the commands of the judge, they

[4] St. John xix. 36.

broke the legs of the first of the thieves, that is, of the one who was on the right hand, and who, after having believed in and confessed Jesus Christ, received this pain with patience, increased his merits and obtained a happy end to his torments, and by having his legs broken entered all the more quickly into his rest, in fulfilment of the promise made to him by our Saviour—'This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' Afterwards they broke the legs of his fellow malefactor who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus with the intention to inflict the same outrage on Him, finding that He was already dead they desisted from their intent and did not break His legs, God making this difference between the innocent and the culpable, and so disposing all things in order that other still greater miracles and mysteries should be worked on the dead body of our Saviour.

For now one of the soldiers who was there[5] ran with great fury against the dead body of our Lord and opened His right side with a spear, piercing His Heart entirely through with it. For so was it revealed to St. Bridget.[6] *Et sic stantibus turbis in circuitu venit unus accurrens cum furia maxima, et infixit lanceam in ejus latere dextro tam vehementer et valide, quod quasi per aliam partem corporis lancea voluit pertransire.* And in another place she says, *In corde punctus erat, tam amare et immisericorditer, quod pungens non destitit, dum lancea attigit costam, et ambæ partes cordis essent in lancea.* 'The body of the Lord,' says the Saint, 'being surrounded by the multitude, one of the soldiers came running with great fury, and with a lance pierced His right side with such force and vehemence that it seemed as if the lance were about to pierce through to the other side.' And again, 'He was so cruelly and so mercilessly wounded, that he who pierced Him was not satisfied until the spear reached the side and had pierced through the whole of His breast from the one side to the other.' And thus our sins also pierced His loving Heart when He was alive, even as the soldier pierced it when He was dead.

[5] St. John xix. 34.
[6] Lib. vii. *Revel.* c. 15, prope finem.

If we examine into the intention of the soldier who did this, it appears that it sprang from his wantonness and anger, being filled as he was with indignation that our Saviour should so soon have died, and that by His death He should have prevented them from breaking His legs and thus have escaped further torments and insults from the soldiers and the Jews. As, therefore, he could not now torment and outrage Him living, he determined to show what was in his mind by piercing His dead body with the lance. For it was the height of inhumanity and cruelty thus to vent his rage against a dead body, and to pierce it through the heart, which is the fountain of life. And therefore Holy Church, calling the wood of the Cross sweet, and sweet the nails by which was suspended upon it the sweet burthen of the body of our Lord, *Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulce pondus sustinens*, calls on the other hand the iron of the lance hard and cruel, *Quae vulneratus insuper mucrone diro lanceæ.* For if it was cruel to wound His Heart whilst He was yet alive, it was not less inhuman to wound it after death. But if we consider the sweetness of the Heart of our Lord, we shall find that the lance is much sweeter than the nails and the Cross, because, if the Cross and the nails touched the Body and the Feet and Hands of our Lord, the lance touched His Heart and opened out to us a gate and path into it.

Sed unus militum lancea latus ejus aperuit—'One of the soldiers opened His side with a lance.' On which St. Augustine says,[7] *Vigilanti verbo Evangelista usus est, ut non diceret latus ejus percussit, aut vulneravit, aut quid aliud*, etc.—'The Evangelist uses this word very advisedly, for he does not say that the soldier wounded or struck the side of our Lord, but that he opened it, showing thereby that he opened a door by which we might freely enter into the Heart of Jesus Christ, and through which the treasures of His Heart might come forth and communicate themselves to us.' For if the life of each one of us issues from his heart, and it is because of this that the Wise Man[8] counsels us to keep it with all watchfulness, so from the Heart of Jesus Christ was to issue the life of all men. For this cause

[7] Tom. x. Tract. 120, *in Joan.* [8] Prov. iv. 23.

it was not meet that He should keep it for Himself alone, but that He should allow Himself to be wounded in it, and that although He was dead, the gate of life should be opened in His side, that by His death we might all live, and that by the life which comes forth from Him we might rise again.

In this way the Church was formed out of the side of our Lord when He was reclining on the Cross,[9] as a type of which the first woman was taken out of the man when he was asleep. Although Adam was sunk in a deep sleep, Eve came forth alive and awake, and was called the mother of all the living. This was a great sacrament,[10] in which was represented the union of the Church with Jesus Christ, Who was laid on the Cross with His head inclined, in the manner and guise of one who sleeps, and from His opened side came forth the blood and the water out of which His Spouse was formed and beautified. Our Lord being dead, the Church came forth alive, the Mother of all those who live by virtue of the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. O death, by which the dead are restored to life! O wound, by which all wounds are healed! O Blood, by which the unclean are cleansed! This is the consolation of the sorrowing, the strength of the tempted, the refuge of the afflicted. Through this gate enter and come forth the holy bees to make their honeycombs in the secret of the Heart of Jesus. 'This is the rock where the conies hide themselves,[11] and whither those fly who have wings like a dove,'[12] there to find their rest and their healing. This is the door which God commanded Noe to make in the side of the ark,[13] that all those privileged creatures who were destined not to perish in the Flood should enter by it. This is the open gate of the city of refuge,[14] where malefactors are secure from the anger of God. This is the golden and beautiful gate of the true Temple of God,[15] where beggars and sick always receive health and mercy. This is the gate of Paradise, which was closed by the sin of the first Adam, and opened through the merits of the

[9] Gen. ii. 21. [10] Ephes. v. 32.
[11] Psalm ciii. 18. [12] *Ibid* liv. 7. [13] Gen. vi. 16.
[14] Deut. xix. 12. [15] Acts iii. 2.

second, and of which He had Himself said[16]—'I am the door, by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.' This is the door the golden key of which is kept by the privileged friends and favourites of God. Oh, how despised are the gates of the palaces of kings, and the favours and graces of princes, by those who have license to enter by this door into the cellar of precious wines[17] and into the secret chamber of God! *Hæc porta Domini; justi intrabunt in eam.*[18] This is the forge in which there is a continual blazing fire, whereby our hearts may be enkindled, and where they are continually being moulded into the image of God. This is the proof of the fervent love and immeasurable charity of our Saviour, that He not only keeps His arms stretched out in order to receive us within them, but keeps His Heart open that He may receive us therein also.

And if the Apostle says that his heart is enlarged,[19] and that all the faithful might be contained in it without its being straitened, how much more wide and how much more spacious is the Heart of Jesus Christ to embrace within itself all of His infinite charity? For a dwelling so vast and so glorious, it was meet that there should be opened in His side a door by which He should invite us to enter in. Thus it is that breastplate of the High Priest of the New Testament,[20] which was one single stone, and bore written upon it, not twelve names only, but in truth the names of all mankind. And although He received this wound after death, He kept it after He became alive again to be an ornament of His glorified and resuscitated body, and a fountain of light and of love. Through this the apostle St. Thomas,[21] touching it and putting his fingers into the wound, had his understanding suddenly enlightened with a dazzling flame of faith, and his will enkindled with a burning fire of love.

Oh, how sweetly does our Saviour feast, how wonderfully draw to Himself, how strongly does He inebriate His chosen ones, with the sovereign wine which flows from this divine fountain! How greatly He favours His friends by giving them

[16] St. John x. 9. [17] Cant. ii. 4. [18] Psalm cxvii. 20.
[19] 2 Cor. vi. 11. [20] Exodus xxviii. 11. [21] St John xx. 27.

a door in His side whereby to enter into the inmost depths of His Heart, and to embrace them in it with the arms of the closest friendship and most familiar intercourse! This is true love, these are true favours, not such as are bestowed by man. For this reason our Lord, after His Resurrection, in order to collect again and cheer up His Apostles, who were all timorous and scared, showed them, when He appeared to them, His hands and His side, that in them they might see the excessive greatness of the love with which He loved them and all the Church. For of old He had said[22]—'Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, thou hast wounded My Heart,' now it is not only wounded, but He keeps it entirely open. *Unus militum lancea latus ejus aperuit.*

CHAPTER XLVI.

Out of the wounded side of our Lord came forth blood and water.

Ex continuo exivit sanguis et aqua. As the soldier drew the lance out of the side of our Lord, immediately there came out of it a fountain of blood and water, which bathed the whole body and flowed down even to the ground. O abyss of divine generosity! There always remains something for God to give us! He has already given us His life, which is all that one friend can give for another, and, as it seemed, shed the whole of His blood through the wounds in His feet and hands. But it was not fitting that He should have nothing to give us poor sinners from so noble a gate which He had opened in His side, and so He gave us also the few drops of blood which, in the anguish of death, had collected themselves to sustain His divine Heart, and which now, like a precious liquor, flowed

[22] Cant. iv. 9.

from its broken and shattered vessel, till there was not left a single drop therein. To prove this there came forth water with and after the blood, because that was the last blood He had; and so our Saviour remained on the Cross a lively and express image of the divine bounty, His Heart opened that He might give and pour Himself forth for us, and His arms were extended to receive His creatures.

The first to receive this blessing from the wound in the side was the soldier who inflicted it, and who, according to general opinion, was called Longinus,[1] and he was blind, or as seems more likely and is affirmed by St. Isidore, blind in one eye only. When he opened the side of our Lord, the blood and water which came out of it flowed down the lance until they touched his hands, and anointing his eyes with that sacred liquor, he was restored to perfect bodily sight; and what is more, he was enlightened in his soul likewise, that by lively faith he might know Who that Lord was Who was dead on the Cross. Then he believed in Him, and was afterwards baptized by the Apostles, and full of sanctity, came to die a Bishop and Martyr, the Church making a remembrance of him on the 15th of March. Such was the effect produced in him by the blood and water which flowed on him from the side of our Lord! The remainder which ran down upon the ground, says Nicephorus,[2] was collected by the Blessed Virgin and the beloved disciple, who were close at hand, into a vessel, and preserved with great piety and reverence.

And as the Evangelist says that blood and water flowed out of His side, it was not any phlegm of humour, as some imagine, but true water which came miraculously from His body; as it was also a miracle that blood should flow from a body that was already dead.[3] Our Lord decreed that thus it should be, in order by so clear a proof to prove that His body was not a phantom, but a real body, for the blood showed that His Body was made of the four humours, and the water also

[1] August. *in Manual*, c. 23; Nazianz. *in Frag. de Christo patient.*

[2] Niceph. Callist. *Hist.* l. 1, c. xxx.

[3] St. Thomas, 3 part, c. 66, art. 4 ad 3 et q. 74, art. 7 ad. 3.

showed that it was made of the four elements, of which water is one.

It is much to be noted with what strong words the Evangelist confirms this history, saying,[4] 'One of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water, and he that saw it with his eyes hath given testimony, and his testimony is true. And we know that he saith true that ye also may believe.' He would certainly not have said these words so urgently if he had not meant to convey by them that in this blood and water which flowed out of the side of the Lord was contained not only a great miracle, but also a great mystery.

What this mystery was the same Evangelist who saw it, and observed it standing at the foot of the Cross, and who wrote it down in his Gospel, himself declares in these words,[5] *Quis est qui vincit mundum, nisi qui credit quoniam Jesus est Filius Dei? Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Jesus Christus: non in aqua solum, sed in aqua et sanguine. Et spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas.* 'For who is he,' he says, 'that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—He Who taught us by his example to tread vain honours under foot, and to despise riches, and to fly from the delights and pleasures of the flesh, and Who taught us the vanity of temporal things, and Who gained for us and promised us those that were to come. No one, then, overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and therefore follows His example as the right one, and believes His doctrine as the only true one, and expects His promises as being secure and certain, and who avails himself of His blood in order to obtain pardon for his sins, and enjoys His grace, so as to conquer in the present conflict, and participates in His merits, that through them he may enter on the good things which are to come.

Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Jesus Christus, non in aqua solum, sed in aqua et sanguine—He of Whom we say and of Whom we must believe that He is the Son of

[4] St. John xix. 34, 35. [5] 1 St. John v. 5.

God, is Jesus Christ, Who came into the world by water and by blood, not by water only, but by water and blood. The Precursor, St. John Baptist, came by water only, as he himself says,[6] 'I baptize with water only;' therefore his baptism was not efficacious for the washing away of sins. But the baptism of Jesus Christ was efficacious for the washing away of sins by the blood which He shed on the Cross, because Jesus Christ came by blood.

Hence it is that several times during the course of His life did our Lord unite together these two things, water and blood. As a Child of a week old, He shed tears together with the blood of His circumcision. At the Last Supper He washed the feet of His disciples with water that He might afterwards give them to drink of His blood. In the chalice He mixed water with the wine that He was about to convert into His blood; and in the Garden, being in agony, blood was mingled with His sweat. Who shall say how many tears during the course of His Passion flowed from His eyes, and mingled with the blood that flowed from His veins? for St. Paul tells us that in the days when His life lasted,[7] 'He offered up His prayers and supplications to God with strong cries and with tears.' Finally, after His death there came forth from His side true water and blood. Jesus Christ, then, came not by water only, or blood only, but by blood and water, to show us the effect His blood would have, which was to wash away the stains of sin. For this St. John says,[8] that one of the ancients, who were before the throne of the Lamb, showing him the saints clothed in white robes, asked of him, 'Those clothed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?' And he answered, 'My lord, thou knowest.' And the ancient said to him, 'These are they who have come out of many and great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Thus although with good reason the robes which are dyed in blood remain tinged with its colour, yet notwithstanding, the blood of the Lamb, although in its substance it is blood, yet in effect it washes and

[6] St. John i. 26. [7] Heb. v. 7. [8] Apoc. vii. 13.

whitens garments, even as if it were water. Therefore Jesus Christ came by water and by blood, and not by water only, but by water mingled with blood.

Et Spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas. It is the Spirit which testifies that Jesus Christ is the truth, because in the Old Law, which was the period of darkness and of figures, Moses likewise came, who was a faithful minister of God, and he came by water and by blood. On account of which, the first sign he gave whereby to chastise the Egyptians, to punish the obstinacy of Pharoah, and to prove that he came in the name of God,[9] was to turn all the water into blood; and the last sign,[10] by which he accomplished the deliverance of His people was to drown the same Egyptians in the sea, which, being called the Red Sea, was a representation of water and blood. All the flesh of the sacrifices was washed with water, which thus became mixed with blood, and being sprinkled with it, men were cleansed from all impurities and irregularities under the Law. That pool at Jerusalem[11] in which the sick were healed of whatever infirmity was on them when the water was stirred by an Angel is said by many to have been the bloody water in which those sacrifices had been washed. And the same Moses,[12] also, in order to dedicate the Old Testament, and to confirm the covenant which was then made between God and man, and consecrate the tabernacle and all the vessels destined to be used therein for divine worship, took the blood of goats and calves mixed with water, and with it sprinkled the book of the Law, and all the people, and the tabernacle and vessels. There was hardly anything under the Old Law which was not purified with blood and water.

But, although in the Old Law there was blood and water, these were all shadow and figure, and, as it were, dead ceremonies without spirit; and the spirit which was communicated in the law of grace gave testimony that Jesus Christ was the substance of those shadows, and the truth of those figures.[13] For although the Law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus

[9] Exodus vii. 20. [10] *Ibid* xiv. 27. [11] St. John v. 2.
[12] Heb ix. 19; Exodus xxiv. 8. [13] St. John i. 17.

Christ. Therefore it was not without cause that our Saviour willed that, after His death, His heart should be opened, which is the principle of life and the seat of the vital powers, that it might be understood that the water and blood which flowed from it were not dead and powerless things, but lifegiving and efficacious, and that they were united with His Spirit for the life and redemption of the world.

O most precious blood by which we are redeemed! O most pure water with which we are cleansed! Water by which we are regenerated into the divine and spiritual existence, and blood by which we are sustained and fed therein. O death, by which the dead are raised to life! O Spirit, which came forth from the breast of Christ, which is the breath of all who live! Blood and water came then from His side. What is purer than this blood? what more efficacious than this water, by which, through the power of the Holy Ghost, we are purified and made white? Certainly the Blood of Jesus Christ, was efficacious in washing away our sins by the power of the Spirit, that is, because it is united with the Divinity and the Person of the Son of God. Hence it derives all its value; or because it was shed by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who interiorly moved Jesus Christ our Lord to shed His blood through His love and His obedience to God alone. Therefore, the Apostle says 'If the blood of goats and calves[14] and water,[15] mixed with the ashes of the red heifer, which were dead and spiritless things, cleansed those who were unclean according to the Law, how much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself as an unspotted and stainless victim in the fire of the Holy Ghost, have living power, by the same Spirit, to cleanse our consciences from dead works to raise us to a new life, that by works of life we may serve and please the living God?' In like manner water has the power of washing us, renewing, and regenerating us in the new spiritual creation of grace, not of itself, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to what our Saviour Himself said to Nicodemus,[16] 'Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy

[14] Heb. ix. 13. [15] Num. xix. 9. [16] St. John iii. 5.

Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' So that water which in itself is sterile, is endowed by the Holy Spirit with power to regenerate in Christ all the baptized.

In this manner the new people of God were regenerated through water and blood, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the new law of grace and the New Covenant between God and man was established and confirmed by the blood and water which flowed from the side of Jesus Christ. As of old also, the Old Testament, being a figure of the New, was dedicated with water mixed with the blood of animals For Moses having read to all the people[17] the book of the Law, which contained all the things which God enjoined on His people and the promise He made unto them, the people bound themselves on their part to fulfil and obey these commandments, and Moses on the part of God, and as His minister, bound himself that all the promises should be certain and firm. In order to give greater force to this agreement, he took the blood of the sacrifices mingled with water,[18] and then, on the part of God, sprinkled with it the book of the Law, and afterwards on the part of the people sprinkled them all therewith, saying, 'This is the blood with which is confirmed this covenant which God now makes with you.'

Et Spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas— 'It is the Spirit which testifies that Jesus Christ is the truth of these figures.[19] For indeed, what was the pact and covenant which God made by means of Moses with that ancient people, to the covenant which He made by means of Jesus Christ with the Church until the end of the world? The commandments of that old covenant were burthensome and the promises temporal, and therefore the blood with which it was confirmed was to be that of brute animals. But now in the season of grace, the commandments are sweet and of love and the promises of eternal goods, and the blood with which all are confirmed is that pure blood shed by Jesus Christ. And so, as Moses, after he had read the law, sprinkled the book and the people with water and the blood of victims, so the true Moses,

[17] Exodus xxiv. 7. [18] Heb. ix. 19. [19] 1 John v. 6.

from His high and lofty place read to the Church, which was to last until the end of the world, all that was best and most perfect in the law and commandments of God. The book was no other than Himself, displayed like an open book upon the Cross, and in which was written in blood the most wonderful examples He had given of perfect obedience to the commands of God. There is no other book in which we can better read in what manner God ought to be obeyed and honoured than in Jesus Christ crucified, Who as a good and faithful Mediator, offered to the Eternal Father for His people the priceless treasure of His Merits, and on their part likewise offered an obedience to His commandments such and so perfect as to be an imitation of His own, with which the Father showed Himself to be well pleased, since in order not to lose obedience He gave up His life, being obedient even unto death and that the death of the cross. On the other hand He promised to men on the part of God the pardon of their sins, the help of His grace, and the reward of glory, for all which He made an abundant payment through the value of His most precious travails and by His life and death.

This compact being made between God and men, our Lord being, already dead and the New Testament having been rendered firm and valid by His death, to the end that there should be wanting to its stability none of the solemnities which had been prefigured in the Old (O glory of the Crucified!), there came forth from His side the blood and water with which the book of the Law, and the people chosen and called by God to keep it and to enjoy its promises, might be sprinkled. But as the principal book in which we read the commandments and the counsels of the law of grace is Jesus Christ crucified, and as this same Lord, as Mediator between God and men, appeared before men in the name of God as the true Son of God, and before God in the name of men as true Man and Head of all mankind—hence it is that this our Lord, to complete the whole solemnity in the name of the two parties who were binding themselves, and He being Himself the book in which is contained the commandments and the promises of His

Testament, now poured forth a fountain of blood and water which came from Him as the true and only Victim, and in this He bathed Himself as High Priest of the law of grace, and afterwards bathed therein in due order His mystical body which is the Church. All those who are called into her are sprinkled with this blood and water in the participation of the holy Sacraments. And none is chosen in the eternal predestination of God to the sanctification of his soul and to obedience to the Divine commandments, save through this sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, as says the Apostle St. Peter. *Petrus Apostolus Jesus Christus electis advenis*, etc., *in sanctificationem spiritus, in obedientiam, et aspersionem sanguinis Jesu Christi*—'Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers, etc., chosen to the sanctification of the spirit to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.'

These are the testimonials we have that Jesus Christ is true Man, and true God and Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of men,[20] *Quoniam tres sunt qui testemonium dant in cœlo: Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus; et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra; Spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis; et hi tres unum sunt*—'And there are Three who give testimony in heaven. the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One. And there are three that give witness on earth, the spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are one.' There are three, says the Evangelist, that give witness in heaven that Jesus Christ is the true God—the Eternal Father Who at the river Jordan and on Mount Tabor, said,'This is My beloved Son;' the Word Who said, 'I and My Father are one;' and the Holy Spirit Who descended on Him in the form of a dove, and by means of the Apostles testified to His divinity, and inspired them with faith that they might believe in Him. And these three witnesses are one and the same thing in their substance, and agree in their saying and testimony. Other three witnesses there are on earth which give witness that He is true Man; that is to say, His spirit which He breathed out upon the Cross, and His body which remained suspended upon it, from which flowed

[20] 1 St. John v. 7, 8.

the blood and water. And He could not but be true Man seeing that He had a true soul and a true body. That is a true soul by whose presence the body lives, and by whose absence it dies, and that is a true body which is composed of the four elements and the four humours, such as was that body from which after death, flowed blood and water. There are three then which give witness upon earth that Jesus Christ is true Man, His spirit which expired on the Cross, and the water and blood which flowed from His body, and all three witnesses are unanimous and agree in their testimony. These same witnesses also teach us that Jesus Christ is our Sanctifier and Redeemer, seeing that for us He delivered up His precious Spirit into the hands of his Father, and redeemed us by His blood, and washed us with the water of His holy baptism. And He could not be other than true God and Redeemer, Who gave us water, which by the power of the Sacrament can regenerate us, and Who shed blood which availed for the redemption of the world.

In this way the body of our Saviour on the one hand was still hanging on the Cross in a public and infamous place, and on the other hand His precious blood was presented in the presence of God for the remission of our sins and the redemption of the whole world. This was prefigured by the sacrifices which were offered of old for sin, as the Apostle deeply contemplates in writing to the Hebrews[21]—'Those animals,' he says, 'whose blood is brought into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest for sin, their bodies are taken outside the gate and are burned there.' For God had commanded[22] that the calves and goats which had been sacrificed for the sin of the priests or princes, or for the whole people, should be brought before the door of the tabernacle, and those who had committed the sin should put their hands upon their heads, after which they should sacrifice them, and the blood be taken by the priests into the tabernacle, and the body carried forth without the camp that it might be burnt.

In order that this might be fulfilled, and that the figure should correspond with the truth, Jesus Christ our Lord, having

[21] xiii. 11. [22] Lev. iv. 4.

to sanctify the people with His blood, suffered outside the gate of the city, and His body remained hanging on a tree in the field and in the place common to other criminals.[23] *Exeamus igitur ad eum extra castra, improperium ejus portantes, non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus*—'And since He suffered without the city, let us go therefore to Him without the camp, like Him bearing our Cross, and making ourselves participators in His shame and His sufferings.' Let us come forth from our pleasures, and our honours, let us come forth from our houses and our lands, and let us come forth out of ourselves. In order to come forth in this manner, the Cross will bear us if we will bear it, and, if tribulations and trials follow us as long as we remain in this world, let not the leaving this world weigh upon us, since we shall go forth to that Lord Who suffered outside the gate of the city that He might overcome the world. And if those who are strangers, and are merely passing through a city, do not grieve at going forth from it and setting forward on the road to their own country, let us not be disturbed if the world casts us out, for in it we have no abiding city, but we are in search of a city which is to come, which is eternal and which is outside this world.

[23] Heb. xiii. 13, 14.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Pilate gives permission that the Body of our Saviour should be taken down from the Cross and buried.

Our Lord persevered in remaining on the Cross until He died upon it, and after His death His Body remained suspended there until His side was opened and gave out the blood which remained in it and the water with which the Church was to be washed and beautified, and until all those that desired it had seen Him and had recognized Him placed there in so much torment, The soldiers kept guard over Him, that no one might take Him down, and that thus His shame might last longer than His life, for a public warning to other malefactors. The Jews blasphemed Him before He expired, saying, 'If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' And that blind and faithless people did not perceive that in nothing did He more clearly show Himself to be the Son of God than in not descending from the Cross, merely at their desire and because of their authority. For that most loving Son having ascended the Cross at the will of, and through the obedience He owed to His Eternal Father, it was requisite that He should remain upon it until He was set free by the same will and obedience. Thereby He left us an example not to be restless and in a hurry under tribulation, but to suffer quietly and patiently under it, taking tranquil and prudent measures only, and expecting to be freed by the hand of God at the time and in the manner determined by Himself.

It is much to be noted that the kings of the earth, as their reign comes to an end with their life, begin even whilst they are dying to be despised and forgotten; but our Sovereign King, as He conquered His kingdom in dying, began as soon

as His life had ceased to manifest His glory, even before He had been taken down from the Cross, in order that thus might be accomplished that which had been written of Him, that the Lord should reign even from the tree. Insomuch that while He was on the Cross all creatures made a public and solemn recognition of Him, and the Eternal Father took upon Himself the charge of taking Him down from the Cross, since, through obedience to Him He had not wished to descend from it. And thus He stirred up the hearts of the most illustrious persons in the city of Jerusalem to take Him down with as much honour and reverence as He had been placed there with shame and affront. On this followed His burial, not as a malefactor who had been executed, but as a just man and Redeemer, with all the pomp and preparation which Isaias had prophesied, saying,[1] *In die illa radix Jesse, qui stat in signum populorum, ipsum gentes deprecabuntur, et erit sepulchrum ejus gloriosum*—'In that day shall be a root of Jesse, Who stands as a sign to the people; Him shall the nations supplicate, and His sepulchre shall be glorious!'—the prophet marvelling, and with good reason, that a death so ignominious should be followed by so glorious a funeral.

First, among the rest who took part in this pious office, the authors and chiefs were two, one a senator or magistrate of Jerusalem, and the other a scribe or teacher in the Temple. Both of them were noble, eminent, and rich, as it was natural that those should be who were in favour with the Governor, who possessed authority over the people, and had the means to supply the pomp and expenses of the funeral. One of them was called Joseph,[2] a native of Arimathea,[3] a city of Judæa,[4] otherwise called Rama and Ramathaim,[5] the country of Samuel, and distant about twenty miles from Jerusalem. Of this city Joseph was a native, although he was a near neighbour or even inhabitant of Jerusalem, where he was 'a noble Decurion,' and had a seat in the council and the government. He was, moreover, a man of good life and just, who had secretly

[1] xi. 10. [2] St. Matt. xxvii. 57. [3] St. Luke xxiii. 51.
[4] Judges ix. 41. [5] 1 Kings i. 1.

resorted to the teaching of our Lord, had listened to and believed in His doctrine,[6] and was hoping for the salvation of Israel by means of Him, and that the Kingdom of God—not the temporal and earthly, but the spiritual and divine kingdom —was about to flourish amongst men. But though this was so, he had not yet openly declared himself as a disciple of our Lord,[7] because of his being a rich man and of conspicuous station, out of the respect and fear he had of the Jews.

The other,[8] who accompanied and aided Joseph, was Nicodemus, a doctor and a principal person among the Jews, a Pharisee by profession, and looked up to and respected as a Master in Israel. This was he[9] who at the beginning had recognized that our Saviour was a teacher come from heaven, yet, in order to preserve his authority and not to expose himself to the hatred of his countrymen, he had not dared to come to Jesus by day, but came to Him on one occasion by night to acknowledge Him and to communicate to Him his doubts. And he went forth from that interview sublimely instructed in celestial things, and as to the new birth of those who are to enter into the kingdom of heaven, which was to be wrought through water and through the Holy Ghost.

Although these two distinguished men were secret disciples of our Lord, they did not on that account abstain from defending Him in their councils and public assemblies as well as they could,[10] for in a meeting of the Chief Priests and Pharisees, when they were all condemning our Saviour and His doctrine, and condemning also the common people for following Him in their ignorance and fondness for novelty, Nicodemus took up His cause and spoke gravely in favour of our Saviour, characterizing the judges as led away by passion in contravening the letter of the law, by condemning a man without knowing His case or hearing Him. And he did so in such a manner that they all turned upon him, throwing it in his face that he defended the Galilean as if he himself were one, and as if out of Galilee any prophet had ever risen. And, treating him as a

[6] St. Mark xv. 43. [7] St. John xix. 38. [8] *Ibid* 39.
[9] *Ibid* iii. 2. [10] *Ibid* vii. 47.

suspected man, they broke up the council and returned to their homes.

Joseph, likewise, although he was also a secret disciple, when he saw that the Jews had assembled together against our Saviour, would not be led away by them, nor join in their council and resolutions, nor consent to their decrees, and he had either resisted them openly, speaking in favour of the truth, and abhorring their hatred and envy, or else, seeing their obstinacy and depraved will, and having no hope of bringing them to a better mind, he had thought it better to retire without choosing to be present at their deliberations, and in this way to give testimony to the truth in the best manner he could. At least, it appears that he was not present at the meeting held on the Thursday night at the house of the High Priest in order to seek out for witnesses against our Lord, for St. Mark says[11] that all those who were assembled together condemned Him as worthy of death. Still less could he have been present in the prætorium of Pilate, or in the house of Herod with the others who were urgent in bringing accusations against our Lord, nor did he go out of the city and betake himself to Mount Calvary, to give colour by his presence, and favour by his authority, to the iniquitous sentence which was there executed. But, on the contrary, as one who hated so horrible a crime, he remained shut up in his house, giving place to all the diabolical fury of the Jews, and expecting some great marvel in a case so new and so extraordinary.

Then, when he saw the signs, no less mysterious than wonderful, which followed after the death of our Lord, and the public testimony given by all creation to His glory and holiness, he received new courage and strength to declare by his works the faith which until then he had hidden in his heart, and, coming out of his house where he had shut himself up, he entered boldly into the house of the Governor to beg him for the body of Jesus. O efficacy of the death and blood of Christ! When our Lord was preaching, when He was giving sight to the blind, curing lepers, casting out devils, restoring the dead

[11] xiv. 64.

to life, and performing His other miracles, to the astonishment and wonder of all, and when He was being followed and reverenced as a great Prophet, then Joseph and Nicodemus, and others (if by chance there were some) of the richest and chiefest of the citizens who believed in our Lord, concealed their faith, being full of weakness and fear. But now that this same Lord Jesus was repudiated by the Synagogue, calumniated by the Scribes and doctors of the law, accused by the Pontiffs and priests, looked upon as worse than the public robbers and homicides, a man for whom the Cross was demanded by the Jews; when He had been scourged and insulted by the Gentiles, condemned to death by the Roman Governor, and the sentence executed by the ministers and soldiers; when His body was hanging between two thieves for a warning to other malefactors; when the Apostles had taken flight, the disciples were all troubled, and the flock of the Good Shepherd dispersed; when all things were threatening and causing terror and fear in the heart—then, O glory of the Crucified! the Cross remained conqueror, giving courage and force to confess and publicly honour Him Who had died, to those who, out of fear, had not been willing to declare themselves His disciples when He was alive!

Then, as it was already late,[12] and the festival of the Sabbath was drawing nigh—for it began to be kept with the setting of the sun—in which it was not lawful to take down the body from the Cross, nor to engage in the office of burial; seeing that there was but little time left, and that if it passed away, the Body would have to remain on the Cross during the whole of the following day, Joseph[13] went boldly out of his house, and went into Pilate courageously to demand the body of our Lord. For the same cause, that is to say, in order that the bodies might not remain during the whole of the Sabbath day upon the Cross (since that Sabbath day was a high day), the Jews had asked of Pilate that he would give leave to have them taken down from the Cross, after they had been deprived of life by breaking their legs. The legs of the two thieves were accordingly broken, and perhaps they were then immediately

[12] St. Matt. xxvii. 57. [13] St. John xix. 38.

taken down from the cross. Our Saviour they found already dead, and did not break His bones, and as they could not take Him down from the Cross by inflicting this insult upon Him they determined to insult Him by leaving Him upon it. Thus our Saviour remained alone upon the Cross as Lord of the battlefield, in which He had conquered and triumphed gloriously over His enemies, not permitting Himself to be taken down from it by the hands of sinners.

But Joseph who was a just man, did not wish to avail himself of the permission which Pilate had given to the Jews, because they had sought to take Him down impiously and insultingly, whereas he wished to do this with honour and piety. Therefore he had need of boldness to treat with Pilate respecting this matter, since to do so was to declare himself to be our Lord's disciple, at the very time when so many had declared themselves to be His enemies, and to lose much of his own honour by honouring the burial of a man who had died as a criminal. The Body moreover was in an infamous place, and it had just suffered an ignominious and shameful death. The people were filled with rage and thirsting to treat the disciples as they had treated the Master. No one could show himself in public or give himself out as a friend of our Lord, without great risk to his life and detriment to his authority. Above all, the Body could not be taken down without leave from the judge, and the judge was the very man who, through fear and weakness, and against reason, justice, and his own conscience, had condemned Him. What could well be expected, but that he would look upon the honour which any one might wish to show to our Lord as an insult to himself, because any testimony whatever that was given to the innocency of our Saviour was likewise a testimony to his own perverse and iniquitous sentence?

All these difficulties were conquered by the fervour of faith and charity which glowed in the breast of Joseph. And this just man, desiring to have a portion in the Cross of Jesus Christ, determined to trample on his own honour and authority, and sacrifice them to the insults and dishonour inflicted on the

Crucified, making no account of the raging people, nor of the feelings which might be aroused in the weak and cowardly heart of the Governor by his boldness and courage. He took heart,[14] *Et audacter introivit ad Pilatum, et petiit corpus Jesu.* A great request and one of inestimable price and value! He begged the body of Jesus, he begged it of the Governor, and with as great daring as though he were asking for something of his own and which appertained to him of right. *Et audacter introivit ad Pilatum et petiit corpus Jesu*—'And He went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.'

This is the Body formed in the Virgin's womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which the Son of God united to His own Person, that in it and by it He might work the redemption of the world. This is the Body which He offered as an acceptable sacrifice, shedding all His blood upon the Cross to sanctify and adorn His Church, which He had chosen to be His spouse, making it for Himself, and at His own cost, beautiful and without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This is that Body, which for no other purpose than that it might suffer death for the Church, was delivered, by the particular providence and dispensation of God, for that hour, to the powers of darkness, and the hour having passed away, and our Lord having by His obedience accomplished all that had been commended to Him by His Father, it was now to come forth once more out of the power of darkness and return to that of His beloved spouse the Church, for whose sake He had delivered Himself into the hands of His enemies. The Church, therefore, possessed in the Body of Jesus her treasure and her riches, her doctrine and her example, her companion and her consolation, the food whereby she was to sustain herself unto eternal life; and all this was to be brought about by means of the death which He received at the hands of His enemies. For this, Joseph, in the name of the whole Church, went boldly to Pilate and begged from him the body of Jesus, which had been delivered into his power in order to die, and which was now

[14] St. Mark xv. 43.

dead, and had to be restored to the Church that it might give life to her.

Pilate marvelled[15] at what was said when he was told that Jesus was already dead. Perhaps his pain at seeing Him put to death unjustly still remained, and as he desired that He might still be alive, he was unwilling easily to believe that He was dead. His conscience pricked him for the unjust sentence which he had given, and he had some consolation remaining as long as our Lord's life lasted, vainly hoping that some remedy might be found for the error he had committed in condemning Him. He tried and tried in vain, and he could not, do what he would, divest himself of the recollection of the calmness and dignity of our Saviour, and of all that had passed between him and our Lord that day in the prætorium, and it seemed to him that either He was the Son of God, as had been said of Him, or that if He were man, He was worthy of living for ever. Who can doubt but that the weak and unjust judge must have been full of fear when he saw the sun darkened, and the earthquake, and the other signs, of which at every moment, intelligence was brought to his house? Perhaps, also, he was himself seeking new means whereby to take our Saviour down from the Cross, or he was wishing that God would deliver through a miracle Him Whom he, whose duty it was to set Him free by his own authority, had not chosen to deliver. Being occupied by these anxieties and cares, he was astonished when he was told that Jesus was already dead, principally because the torment of the cross was wont ordinarily to be much longer, so as to endure not for some hours only, but even on some occasions for several days. And our Saviour was a young Man, and in the very flower of His age, and it was but a little while before that he had been told He was alive, and that the breaking of His legs was necessary in order to produce death, and the thieves would not have died so promptly if this torture had not been inflicted upon them. He had more hope of our Saviour than of them, because, on account of the miracles which he had heard that He had performed on others, he thought that He must be

[15] St. Mark xv. 44.

possessed of more than human power, and that He would avail Himself of this in order to prolong His life beyond the time of His natural strength.

Pilate, therefore, was astonished when he was told that in so short a time our Lord had expired without suffering any other torment than that of the cross alone. He was a man of luxurious life and an unbeliever, and he did not take it into consideration that if others held out under this torment for a longer time, our Saviour was of much more delicate constitution, and had exhausted His strength by fasts and vigils, by journeys and pilgrimages, and by continual preaching and long prayers. Besides all this, He had passed a terrible night in the dwelling of the High Priest, and on that very day He had been scourged with exceeding cruelty, His head pierced with great thorns, He had been hurried so many times over to and fro from one tribunal to another, and lastly, He had borne on His shoulder the heavy wood of the Cross through the public streets of the city. By all these things, as well as the affliction and agony which His loving Heart had suffered whilst among the waves of that tempestuous sea of sorrows, He was now quite exhausted, worn out and consumed, so that it was a wonder He could have remained three hours alive upon the Cross. Yet He remained alive during all the time which was necessary for concluding the enterprise He had taken on Himself, and for fulfilling the Scriptures. Then, all being finished and accomplished, as one who had no desire to live more, He bowed His head and commended His Spirit into the hands of His Father.

And God ruled in His secret providence that the Governor should doubt and be astonished, and should take information, for so it was meet, for the greater glory of the Resurrection and for the greater consolation of the faithful, that the death of our Redeemer should be certain, and that a juridical verification thereof should be made.[16] Therefore Pilate sent for the Centurion, and as he was an officer of his, and placed by him at the head of the soldiers who were keeping watch over the body of our Lord, it was most proper to believe him and receive his

[16] St. Mark xv. 44

testimony. The Centurion was perhaps on Calvary, keeping guard over the deceased body of our Lord, and as he was to be witness of His death, God had shed upon him the rays of His light and the benediction of His sweetness, so that, seeing our Saviour expire with so loud a voice and cry, he believed and confessed and glorified God, saying—'Indeed this Man was the Son of God.' When Pilate therefore summoned him and inquired of him whether it was true that our Lord was dead, what answer can we think that he would make? His information, no doubt, was such that the former wonder of the Governor at the fact of His death was not so great as that which he now felt at the circumstances by which it was accompanied. Accordingly, he gave Joseph the body, to honour it and bury it as his devotion prompted. And as another Evangelist says,[17] *Jussit reddi corpus*—he commanded that the body should be restored as a possession which of right belonged to him and to all the other faithful disciples who were members of that Body which, for a certain space of time, and that only for certain results, which had now been accomplished, had been delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

Joseph came forth well contented with the success of his boldness, and armed with the authority and decree of the Governor, and still more with the divine favour and assistance, immediately set about preparing all things necessary for the interment, not secretly, but in public, and in the eyes of the whole city.[18] Nicodemus likewise came without waiting for the silence and darkness of the night, as he had done at the beginning, when he was weak in faith, and they both united together to take down the body from the Cross and bury it honourably, without sparing any cost or risk, making any account of their own honour and authority, or taking any heed either of the hatred and murmurings of the common people or the opinion and judgment of the graver sort, and what is still more, without paying any respect to the law itself.

For the law[19] severely prohibited any one from touching the bodies of the dead, and if any man touched the body of a

[17] St. Matt. xxvii. 58. [18] St. John xix. 39. [19] Numb. xix. 16.

man that had died either naturally or by violence, or even any dead bone, or the grave itself, he was regarded as unclean until with certain ceremonies he had been cleaned and purified. The lawgiver intended by this to turn away the people, who were weak and badly inclined to the idolatrous superstition of the Gentiles, from the unlawful dealings and necromancy which they practised by means of the dead, and also to inspire them with horror against sins, which are the dead works which defile the spirits of those who do them. This law then, being so, gave a very apparent pretext by which these two men, who held such a high position and were so much esteemed, might, under colour of religion and piety, have withdrawn from so odious and dangerous an undertaking. But their faith overcame this difficulty likewise, teaching them that that dead Body would not make them unclean, but would purify those who were unclean, and that the Pasch was not contaminated by this dead Man, but on the contrary, that it was renewed, since by means of His death our Lord became the principle and origin of all purity and holiness, and the Author of the resurrection, of life and of immortality.

For this reason, then, these noble men not only took courage to bury Him, but also to honour Him in all possible ways. Joseph[20] gave Him the sepulchre which he had prepared for himself, regarding himself as highly blessed in that he was permitted to deposit the treasure of life in the dwelling that he had prepared for himself after death, and being filled with a sure hope of resurrection, since in his sepulchre was laid the source of life. In like manner, confessing Him to be the New Man, the Giver of the New Law and of the New Testament, and the Restorer of the world, he buried Him in a new grave, and wrapped the Body in linen cloths, not only clean, but new,[21] which he bought for this purpose, deeming it not to be meet that the dead body of our Saviour should be wrapt in anything which had touched the body of any living man. So great is the reverence and purity with which he taught us to treat and receive the Body of our Lord, and the care and pain with which

[20] St. Matt. xxvii 60. [21] St. Mark xv. 46.

we ought to prepare ourselves for it. At the same time, Nicodemus made ready aromatic ointments, not grudgingly, but in abundance, since when he came to join Joseph,[22] he brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, in quantity about one hundred pounds' weight. He thought not to embalm our Saviour to preserve Him from corruption, for he well knew that within that self same Body was the principle of incorruption. Therefore he did not open It, nor take out the interior of His Body, as is done with other dead bodies, but he left Him whole as He was and ready for resurrection, which was to be immediately, before the Body had time to become decomposed. He anointed Him indeed, and washed Him, and made Him, as it were, swim in those aromatic spices, honouring Him with all that lavishness, declaring the greatness of His devotion and His love, and giving testimony that in that same Body was contained the treasure of our incorruption in much greater abundance than was represented by that hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes.

St. John xix. 39.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The Body of our Saviour is taken down from the Cross, and laid in the Sepulchre.

Joseph and Nicodemus then left the city with these preparations and with all the instruments and attendants necessary for taking the Body of our Lord down from the Cross. The Blessed Virgin our Lady and the Mother of our Lord, with great courage and marvellous fortitude, was there keeping company with the dead Body of her Son, and doing reverence to the mystery of the Cross with the most profound humility and sublime conformity to the will of God. She was not anxious or troubled about the burial, because she knew that it was in the charge of God, so she awaited with quiet and tranquil heart whatever He would dispose concerning it, attending only to what belonged to herself to do, which was not to forsake her post, but to discharge with equanimity and perseverance the part assigned to her in the Cross, that is to say, in the sufferings and dishonour of her Son. The maternal heart of the Blessed Virgin felt tenderly the cruel death of her beloved Son, her soul was pierced by the spectacle which she had before her eyes, and the flood of her heart's grief caused abundant streams of tears to flow calmly and gently down her divine face.

O sovereign Virgin! no less favoured and aided by God than afflicted and pierced with grief, on whom alone amongst all His pure creatures God shed the full treasures of His grace, and in whom He that is mighty wrought great things, since the Holy Spirit, Who was her teacher and dwelt within her, lost no opportunity of instructing her, and, by means of that Book which she had before her open upon the Cross, communicated

to her every moment new truths and new illuminations, enkindled in her will fresh fires of fervour, and manifested to her, as far as is possible in this life, the treasures of the wisdom of God which were hidden in her Son. Divine Sanctuary of the most Holy Trinity, in whose breast were formed the most delicate first-fruits of grace, in whose praises those who know least are most daring and those who have acquired some knowledge find themselves poor and dumb! So great was thy increase of knowledge and love by the opportunities of this day, that the Cherubim are ignorant, and the Seraphim lukewarm, by thy side. And, although the angels of peace wept bitterly over this day, yet the obsequies of the Son of God would have been defective, and have failed in solemnity, if they had not been honoured and accompanied by the devout tears of His Mother who knew Him and loved Him better than all. O wonderful mystery of Divine Providence, which thus delighted itself in the griefs of the Virgin and rejoiced in her tears! For, if a fragrant tree is all the more prized when its leaves and flowers have greatest virtue, so that perfumes of greater fragrance and sweetness are distilled from it, of how much price in the eyes of God were those tears which flowed from so much reverence and so much love and grief, so much knowledge and so sublime and wondering contemplation, such humble thankfulness, and so much conformity and fervent self-sacrifice!

The Blessed Virgin was occupied in this contemplation, accompanied by the Evangelist and the other holy women, and was honouring the death of her Son with her tears and still more with the affection of her heart, when there arrived at Calvary those two noble men, Joseph and Nicodemus, with the others who came with them. The other holy women drew near and gathered round the Blessed Virgin, who, as the Mother of the Dead, represented the widowhood and orphanhood of the whole Church, and the Evangelist, who now performed the office of a good son, advanced to meet them. No words were heard but only tears, no greetings exchanged but only sobs, and especially when they drew nigh to that afflicted

Mother, who had before her eyes the Son of her womb dead and nailed to a Cross. Sorrowful spectacle, and one which would have broken the hardest and rudest heart!

Joseph and Nicodemus did reverence and honour to our Lady. She wept and they wept also, nor was it possible at first to speak another word. At last they said, 'Ah, Lady, this torment is over, thy Son is at rest, and has obtained the victory from the very hands of His furious enemies. O Lady, thou hast much wherewith to console thyself amidst so many causes of grief. The innocence of thy Son is very well known. All have seen the outrage which has been done Him and the violence with which His cause has been treated, the envy of the accusers and the weakness of the Governor have been published and made manifest. On the other hand, the constancy modesty, the silence and dignity of thy Son were such, O Lady, as to cause the astonishment, admiration, and reverence of the very judge who condemned Him. O miserable nation and city in which such an enormity has been committed! who have subjected themselves to the penalty of so terrible a crime, and to the infamy of so abominable an iniquity! God forbid that we, Lady, should have taken part in so diabolical a counsel. We remained shut up in our houses, that we might not see or hear or understand things which we could not remedy. Yet what excuse can we find for having shut ourselves up?—rather we must confess our weakness and cowardice in having concealed ourselves when we saw our Master condemned, instead of coming forth at the risk of our lives to defend His innocence and truth. But the determined will of God was that this Innocent should die for the common good of all, and as for the mad and furious people, how would it have been possible to bring them right and restrain them? Now we come, O Lady, and we present ourselves before thee here, too late indeed to defend and aid the living, and still in time to do honour to and bury the dead. We have already a permission from the judge, do thou also, Lady, as a Mother, give us leave, and receive in the name of thy Son and our Master this our ready will and devout service.'

It is impossible but that the most meek and humble Virgin should have felt herself greatly indebted to these men, and that she should thank them with much courtesy for their coming and purpose. She would tell them the goodwill her Son had to them, and the obligations under which they both were to them, and the joy she felt that God had chosen and given them courage for such a work, which would receive a great reward both in this world and the next. And then, taking their leave of her because the evening was already far advanced, they set themselves to work to take the holy Body down from the Cross, that it might be buried. The Mother was filled with new emotion, expecting to gaze on her Son very close and to receive Him from the arms of the Cross into her own. They next fixed the ladders, and, not trusting this office to servants, they themselves ascended them, and placing themselves in a convenient position, they made use of hammers and pincers to draw out the nails which were driven firmly into the Cross, and as soon as the nails were loosened, the arms and the whole weight of the Body fell upon them as they were removing the nails. Blessed men! who were found worthy to receive the first embraces of the crucified and dead Body of our Lord, to adorn and beautify themselves and to stain their vestments with the precious Blood which had flowed from His wounds. With how great consolation and devotion of soul one of them remained holding the sacred Body in his embrace, whilst the other descended to take the nails out of the Feet! When this was done, then by little and little and with the utmost reverence they lowered the sacred Body, those who stood by aiding them as they could, until after so terrible a tempest it once more touched the earth.

The Blessed Virgin was there waiting to receive Him into her arms, nor could there be any more fitting or solemn receptacle than these. When kings return as conquerors from battles, and especially if they have fought valiantly for their own persons and the liberation of their kingdom from some grievous yoke and servitude, they are received by their vassals with great demonstrations of honour, and public rejoicings,

with dances, acclamations, triumphal arches, and all the other inventions with which men have contrived to acknowledge publicly and make honourable and magnificent the triumph of their kings, and thus to employ in their service the goods, the honour, and the liberty which they confess that they have received from them. Our King was now returning from fighting with the world and the devil, with sin and with death. He had fought valiantly in His own Person, received many wounds in His body, and had given up His life in the quarrel; He had come forth as a conqueror, and had left all His enemies and ours routed and broken. The fruit of this victory was that we were set free from the power of darkness, and had passed into the kingdom of light and the hope of eternal life. O Catholic Church!—Kingdom chosen by the Son of God, people conquered by His Blood!—with what honour, with what pomp and display, with what solemnity and triumph, with what acclamations, with what songs and praises, with what triumphal arches, with what splendid decorations, with what gifts of price didst thou receive thy King when He descended from the Cross? Of a truth thou didst find nothing else wherewith to receive Him but the arms of His Mother! O souls desirous to honour Jesus Christ and to celebrate His triumphs, acknowledge this grace that God has done to you by laying up all His treasures in this Virgin, that in her and through her you might honour your King and Redeemer! O precious pearl of the Church and honour of the human race! Supply, O Lady, our poverty, and open thine arms, and thy bosom, and thy heart, and receive Him within them, after having redeemed us, Him Who when He came to redeem us thou didst worthily receive into thy most pure and holy womb!

Who shall say that the Blessed Virgin was ashamed of her Son because He had died with so much infamy on the Cross, when the Apostle found nothing else in which he could glory save in this self same Cross? The Blessed Virgin, moreover, had all the more reason to glory therein, seeing that she had received through it even more graces and favours than the Apostle. Thou, O Lady, knewest then

the mystery of the Cross better than the Apostle, even after the Gospel had been preached and received. Thou, in thy great humility, knewest better how to esteem and be thankful for the graces of God than any other creature, thou knewest well that all these graces had been gained for thee by thy Son upon the Cross. When thou didst see Him descend from it, wounded and pierced, disfigured and become as it were a leper and dead for thee, what didst thou feel, what words didst thou utter, with what love and longing desire didst thou receive Him? 'Give to me,' thou didst say, 'give to me my Lord!'

When thy most precious Son, O Lady, spoke to thee from the Cross, not quite to kill thee or Himself with emotion, He did not call thee Mother, but He said, 'Woman, behold thy Son.' Tell us now, O Blessed Virgin, by your precious love, if now that He was dead, and that thou wast alone to feel that grief and tenderness, if thou didst call Him Son? When He was of the age of twelve years, and thou didst lose Him for three days and seek Him with such anxiety, thy motherly heart could not contain itself when thou foundest Him in the Temple, nor refrain from calling Him Son, saying,[1] 'My Son, why hast Thou done so?' Now that He is lowered into thy arms, dead of a death of torments, how was it possible for thee to restrain thy love and hinder thyself from exclaiming, 'My Son, how is it that Thou comest to me thus? O sirs, give me my Son and my Redeemer!'

The Blessed Virgin repressed with gravity and modesty the sobs which rose from her heart, whilst tears flowed abundantly from her eyes. She seated herself at the foot of the Cross, she received into her lap the dead Body of her Son, and sustaining Him in her arms, let His head recline upon her virginal breast. Alternately casting her eyes upon Him and then raising them to heaven, she became deeply absorbed in devout meditation on the Passion of our Lord, in compassion, in profound and calm contemplation, and the most sublime affections, both of love and grief, which as long as time lasts will

[1] St. Luke ii. 48.

be felt concerning this mystery by the faithful and most highly favoured amongst the sons of God.

'My Son,' she would say, 'who is it that has done thus unto Thee? I do not complain, Lord, of those who have taken Thy life, since Thou didst offer it of Thy own will for them through obedience to Thy Eternal Father. O Eternal Father; blessed be Thy providence, and blessed be Thy bounty and Thy love, Who, in order to give life to slaves, hast delivered to death Thy very Son Himself! My Son, these were Thy longings; Thy desires are now fulfilled. These wounds, these sufferings, these nails, and this lance which I now see on Thy body—all these are what Thou hast borne throughout all Thy life in Thy Heart. How couldst Thou live, seeing Thou hadst to bear therein so heavy a cross?

'Thou hast died, Lord, at the hands of Thy enemies, not as a weak and cowardly man, but as the valiant and courageous die, and as the Son of Him Whose Son Thou art. O Son of the Eternal Father! this was the obedience, this the zeal for the honour of God, this the love for our neighbour, the contempt of all earthly things, the constancy in preaching the truth, and fortitude in coming forth in its defence, which He Who was the true Son of God had to teach in the world. O Eternal God, great in justice and great in mercy! what justice is this which Thou hast executed on Thy beloved Son? And what mercy is this which Thou hast shown to vile and ungrateful slaves?

'My Son, dost Thou not speak to me? If Thou didst undergo pain and agony when Thou didst enter upon Thy Passion, is it much that I should feel them now that Thou comest forth from it? and if Thou wert so conformed to the will of Thy Father then, I also am conformed to Thine, it is sufficient that Thou shouldst have willed it, in order that I should will it also, and enough that Thou shouldst have felt it, in order that I should also feel it. O Eternal Father, Who art well pleased and satisfied with the sacrifice of His Body which this innocent Lamb has offered Thee! receive likewise that which His afflicted Mother offers Thee in her heart, and from

this very day, grant abundant mercy to sinners, since it is for their sakes that Thou hast executed so rigorous justice upon Thy Son.'

Thus the Blessed Virgin, with a heart pierced with sharpest grief, was rapt in sublimest contemplation, and her Son, Who, but a little while before, being alive, had offered Himself up with burning charity on the arms of a dead Cross, now, being dead, was laid within the arms of His living Mother. She felt all His sufferings, and offered them also, as far as it was her part to do, for the honour of God and the salvation of men, with all the force of the charity communicated to her by the Holy Spirit. So well pleasing to God was that love with which, in the midst of so many griefs, the Blessed Virgin strained herself to desire the redemption and salvation of the human race, that, as her Son was made a Mediator and the Redeemer of all mankind, so she also became a mediator and advocate for the same.

But now, as it was already evening, those noble and pious men entreated the Blessed Virgin to permit them to bury the Body of our Lord.[2] Near to the place where our Lord had been crucified there was a garden, close to Calvary, where sentence was executed upon malefactors — a garden which Divine Providence had willed should be planted there, and kept so that it might minister to the mystery of our redemption. Because, as our Lord, bearing in mind the tree by which Adam had sinned through disobedience, Himself stretched out His hands on to the tree of the Cross, so also, as Adam had sinned in a garden, He referred to that in beginning His Passion by praying in a garden, and then closing it in another garden as the place of His burial. It was, moreover, meet that it should be a garden where the precious blossom of Jesus should be planted, and the seed of glory and immortality should be buried.

Now, so it was, that in this garden there was a new sepulchre, in which no man had yet been buried. It was in form like a cell or vaulted chamber, hollowed out of the living

[2] St. John xix. 41. [3] *Ibid.*

rock, and of such a height that a man standing upright would hardly with his arm stretched out touch the roof. Towards the east there was a door, so small that it was necessary to stoop low in order to enter by it. On the north side was the place of sepulture, hewn out in the rock, seven feet in length, and raised about three palms above the ground. Of the stone it is said that it was white with a mixture of colour. It appears that this sepulchre was the property of Joseph of Arimathea, and that he himself had hewn it out with great care and art,[4] for the Evangelist says of him that he laid our Saviour in his own new tomb, which he had hewed out of a rock.

From all this we see on the one hand the deep poverty of our Saviour, Who was naked when He died, and not only had no sepulchre, but no shroud in which to wrap His Body. And on the other hand we see the providence of God, Who aroused the devotion of these two rich and leading men to perform this office with all the ceremonies and honours which occurred to them. First, placing the Body upon a stone (which is the first thing to be visited at the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and is called *Lapis unctionis*), and laying it upon the linen, they anointed it with no small quantity of aromatic spices, and wrapt it in new white linen cloths, which Joseph had bought for the purpose. They did with Him[5] all that was customary among the Jews to do to persons of high rank when they were buried. They did nothing less, because it seemed to them that our Lord, because He had died on the Cross, had not lost thereby any of His dignity, so that less should be done for Him than was usual, nor did they, on the other hand, seek to do more, for the sake of their own modesty and that also of our Lord Himself, Who was lying dead, nor would they indulge in the funeral pomp which would have been agreeable to their faith and devotion, but rather chose to limit themselves and conform in all things to what was customary.

After this they bore His holy Body to the sepulchre, accompanied by some pious men and some disciples who had collected together, by the pious women who were with the Virgin, and

[4] St. Matt. xxvii. 60. [5] St. John xix. 40.

much more, by all the angels and blessed spirits who had come there to do Him honour, assisting at His burial. Joseph and Nicodemus placed the Body in the sepulchre hewn out of the rock, excusing themselves modestly for placing Him there,[6] because the sepulchre was near at hand, and there was no time, on account of the Sabbath, to seek another more sumptuous sepulchre, or to convoke a larger assemblage of people, or prepare a greater procession and display through the streets of the city.

But in truth, no preparation of funeral pomp was more meet than this for the interment of our Lord—that is to say, that His Body should be wrapped in clean and new linen, signifying the purity and spotlessness of the souls who are to receive it, and that it should be placed in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, in which no man had hitherto been buried. For as when He made entrance into this life, He was born of a Virgin Mother, so when He left it, He returned to a virgin sepulchre, out of which, as of His Virgin Mother, He was to be born a second time to the life of immortality and glory.

There were present there,[7] Mary Magdalene[8] and the other Mary, the mother of Joseph[9] and the other women who had come with Him from Galilee, and who, seating themselves over against the sepulchre, wept and lamented the death of our Lord, and at the same time saw and noted[10] the place where He was laid, and the manner and guise in which the Body was disposed in the sepulchre. For they intended to return after the festival was past to seek some alleviation of their grief and their love, at least by seeing Him, adoring Him, and renewing the ointments.

Of the Blessed Virgin our Lady it is not said that she was present at the burial, and perhaps they would not allow her to assist at it, that her tears and grief might not be increased. She therefore remained on Calvary, with a proper company. And in order to teach the whole Church the adoration and reverence due to the holy Cross, she was the first moved by

[6] St. John xix. 42. [7] St. Matt. xxvii. 61. [8] St. Mark xv. 47.
[9] St. Luke xxiii. 55. [10] St Mark xv. 47.

the Holy Spirit to remain in adoration before the sacred tree of the Cross, which, until then, had been so abominable and infamous. Her companions also remained, in order that they might accompany her before night back to the city.

CHAPTER XLIX

Our Saviour descends into Hell to set free the souls of the holy Fathers.

The gates of heaven had been closed until our Saviour died. He was the first, as we have said, Who by means of His Blood rent the veil in twain and opened a way of entrance into the Holy of Holies of glory.[1] The Blood of Jesus Christ, says St. Jerome, is the key of Paradise, for that land of the living, which the first Adam had lost, the second Adam regained, and returned and restored it to us after the other had lost it. In the Gospel He promises us the kingdom of heaven, which although named in the old time was not yet to be found. This St. Jerome says. But since, as up to that time, there was no kingdom of heaven, all the souls of those who died were detained in a prison in the lowest parts of the earth. And as their merits and their states were different, so also were the places in which they were shut up. Some souls went forth out of this life with mortal sins, and went to the place which we properly call hell. Others had venial sins, or had some temporal penalty to pay for mortal sins already pardoned, which they had committed in this life, and they went into Purgatory. Others had no other sin than original sin, such as children who died without redemption, and these went to the Limbus of children. Others there were who departed this life in a state

[1] Hier. ad Dardan, Epist. 129.

of grace, without having to pay any penalty at all, but they could not enter heaven until our Saviour had paid the common debt of all mankind. These went to another place or receptacle in hell, which the Evangelist calls[2] the bosom of Abraham, because in it was this great Patriarch, and all those who by imitation of his faith and his justice were the true sons of God.

Thus it happened, that as it was not possible to see God before the death of our Redeemer, all souls of necessity up to that time had to endure some pain. The penalty was of two kinds: one, that which we call the pain of loss, which consists only in being without the sight of God, the other was the pain of sense, such as is the torment which is inflicted by fire. Each of these penalties might be temporal or eternal. And, as hence resulted four kinds of pain, there were four receptacles or places set apart for them. For some suffered the pains both of loss and of sense together, and if this was to be for ever they were in hell, if it was to be temporary they only went to Purgatory. Others there were who were only to suffer the pain of loss; when it is to be eternal they went to the Limbus of children, and when it is for a certain fixed time, to the Limbus which is called that of the Fathers, or the bosom of Abraham.

How these places were arranged is not clearly known, nor how or in what manner they were divided and separated from one another. But it seems certain that the place of the condemned was in the lowest part of the earth, and that the Limbus of the holy Fathers was much above it. For the Gospel says,[3] that when the rich man died, he was buried in hell, and that lifting up his eyes when he was in torments he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom; and that when he begged Abraham to send Lazarus that he might bring him some refreshment, it was answered him that that was not possible, among other reasons because of the great space there was between one place and the other, which was so pathless and impassable that it was impossible to go from one to the other. This, when our Saviour died, was the state of the receptacles of hell.

[2] St. Luke xvi. 22. [3] *Ibid.*

Immediately, then, after He had expired on the Cross, His most holy Soul, united with His Divinity and accompanied by innumerable angels, descended in Person to the deepest abysses of hell, where so great a number of souls were shut up. It was very meet that of Himself He should perform that journey, that He might break open that prison, set at liberty the prisoners, glorify by His presence those just men, and collect together after His victory those rich spoils. And thus He declares to us, by another new argument, His own humility and most excellent charity, since no place was so abject or infamous but His love of souls and desire for their redemption took Him thereto.

And since those souls were so many in number and so excellent in merit, seeing that they were those of kings, patriarchs, and prophets who had believed in Him, had desired Him, prefigured and preached Him, and who during the course of so many ages, one after the other had kept up in the world faith and hope of the redemption promised by God; seeing that they had been such familiar friends of God, enjoying His graces and the blessings of communion with Him, and that among these were His fathers and progenitors after the flesh, and finally that all the fruits which His Passion had produced in the preceding centuries were there collected together, it was very meet that He should Himself visit and console them, and that He Who had been their Redeemer and the purchaser of their freedom should Himself be the one to bring them the first glad tidings thereof. This was, moreover, meet in order that His victory might be more renowned and His triumph more glorious, that having conquered the kingdom of hell upon the Cross, He should descend thither as into His own realms, entering there, not as prisoner, but as King and Liberator, filling those dungeons with the splendour and glory of His Majesty, and giving perfect liberty to all those who, having lived in His faith and died in His grace, were prepared to enter, by virtue of His Blood, into the blessedness of His glory.

The Soul of Christ our Lord then descended only into that of the four places or abodes of hell which we have called the bosom of Abraham, where were the souls of the holy Fathers.

For there was good cause that He should descend there, where He had so many friends, where He had so many rewards to bestow, and whence He was to come forth with such rich spoils. But not for this did He omit to visit in a certain manner the other places of hell, manifesting in them His power by some new and particular effects, so that in general all knew Him, and the redemption which He had purchased on the Cross was revealed to them, and the dignity to which God had raised Him above all other creatures. This new knowledge wrought different results, according to the various dispositions of the souls who were there.

For doubtless those who were in Purgatory felt some alleviation in their pains, and a great consolation and delight at seeing their redemption now accomplished and the gate of heaven opened, knowing for certain that after they had finished the purification of their sins they would not be detained (as had formerly been the case) in the dungeons of Limbus, but that they would immediately enter into possession of glory. Besides this, some of them were entirely liberated from their sufferings in honour and reverence of that day. And that the rejoicing might be greater still, and the company which was to attend our Saviour more complete, those were set free who, according to the divine ordinance, had on that day fulfilled the term of their banishment and penitence, or who, through the particular faith and devotion which during life they had had towards the Redeemer, or for their special hope in His death and Passion, merited that, through the merit of that same Passion, a plenary indulgence and remission from their pains should that day be given them. The souls of the condemned and the evil spirits were reproved by our Saviour for their incredulity or obstinacy and pertinacity, and, for their pride and hardness of heart, felt fresh suffering and increase of rage and fury.

And both these, as well as the children in Limbus and the souls in Purgatory, and those of the holy Fathers—some of their own will, inspired by faith and love, others with natural respect and reverence, as the children in Limbus, and others perforce and against their will—all bent their knees and did

homage and reverence to our Lord, as says the Apostle: *In nomine Jesu, omne genu flectatur cælestium, terrestrium, et infernorum*—'That at the name of Jesus every knee be bowed, of those in heaven and in earth and under the earth.'

CHAPTER L.

The Jews put a guard at the Sepulchre.

NOTWITHSTANDING all this, our Lord permitted that, although the powers of hell had been conquered, the Chief Priests and the Synagogue of the blind and unbelieving Jews should persevere in their hardness and obstinacy. Not content with having seen Him Whom they had hated without a cause dying on a tree, they devised new means and exerted all their power to obscure His glory and blot out His name from the memory of men. He was now dead, and they still feared Him as though He had been alive. The disciples were hidden through fear of the priests and the scribes, and the scribes and priests in their turn were all in trouble for fear of them. Their evil consciences tormented them, and pictured to them what was about to take place, namely, that those few weak and timid disciples would preach and persuade the people that the dead Man had risen again, and was King of the Jews and of all the world, and that if many had believed in Him whilst He was alive, many more still would believe in Him now He was dead. Furious at this issue which they thus pictured to themselves, they obstinately repeated what had been said of them, and in their name:[1] *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos*—'We will not have this Man to reign over us.'

[1] St. Luke xix. 14.

Having come to an agreement upon this matter,[2] on the next day after Friday, which would be the Sabbath, early in the morning, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees betook themselves by common consent to Pilate, that they might make to him their petition. They did not take into account that it was the Sabbath, and also the Pasch, on which account that Sabbath was a high festival, and that it was not permitted them, either by their law, or by their customs and traditions, to appear before the judge, to beg of him a guard, to take the soldiers to the sepulchre, to seal the stone, and perform all else which they required. Their anxiety alone spurred them on, and the business, which did not admit of delay. These men, who had pretended to be such zealots for keeping of the Sabbath, that it seemed to them that even mercy could not dispense with its observance to heal or take care of a sick person, were now ready to break the Sabbath, moved by their envy, to do evil to and to calumniate a just Man. Those who the day before had scrupled to enter the prætorium on the day of the Pasch, these same, on the very Sabbath of the Pasch itself, not only went into Pilate's house, but went with cajoling and flattering words, the better to succeed in their business, calling him lord, whom for having desired to appear so and to exercise authority in he name of the Romans, they abhorred and looked upon as a tyrant.

'My lord'—*Domine*[3]—they would say, 'the tricks of this Man were such that they fill us with anxiety now He is dead, and we, therefore, think it necessary that soldiers should be set to guard His sepulchre. It would have been well to take this precaution from the moment when His Body was placed there, but who can be alive to everything? Now, on considering the matter, we are all agreed as to a point which through forgetfulness we did not attend to, which is that that Deceiver was accustomed to say when He was alive that He would die on the Cross, and then rise again the third day as if He had been dead. In this way He kept the people deceived, for He told them that He was to suffer that kind of death which He

[2] St. Matt. xxvii. 62. [3] *Ibid.* 63.

merited and feared for His crimes, making them thereby believe that He was a prophet, and now by a diabolical artifice He has put them in suspense with the vain hope that He is to rise again with glory. As regards the first, He was indeed a prophet, and He could not help being a true prophet. His life was such that He could not expect any other kind of death. The falsehood of His second assertion will soon be proved, for three days is no long space of time. On this, my lord, we require and beg of thee that thou wouldst interpose thy authority and decree, and order a guard to be set at the sepulchre until the third day be passed, for His disciples perchance may come, and in order to cause this lie to appear truth, they will steal and make away with His Body, where it may be neither seen nor found. And even if they do not dare to appear before us, nor to come to men of education and prudence with such stories as these, the evil is that they will persuade the people of these fables, and will make them believe that He has risen from the dead.

'And although the people is the people, and the multitude are ignorant and lovers of novelty, they do not on this account fail to expose us to risk by their novelties and uproars, because the numbers who followed this Man when He was alive were so great that we had reason to fear that, if the evil were not prevented, our commonwealth might be ruined. For as the multitude He drew after Him was so great, and as He said as He did that He was King of the Jews, and as He taught as He did new doctrines and opinions, what could be expected but that the people would divide itself into different bands and sects, and that they would die by one another's hands, and also by the hands of the Romans, who might justly have come down upon us, imagining that the whole of the nation was rising against them? So great is the power of one deceiver and seditious person. If we saw this when He was still alive, what will happen if the people persuade itself that after death He has risen again? The mischief without doubt would be greater and the error more irreparable. Therefore, my lord, it is well that these dangers should be prevented, and that a

sufficient guard should be in good time set at the sepulchre, that by a little diligence serious inconveniences may be prevented.'

Pilate listened to all this discourse, and saw how envy and hatred still smouldered in the breasts of these men. He had thought that it would have been enough to have scourged our Lord, and was greatly surprised to find that His being dead and buried was not enough to satisfy them, and free them from the fear they had of His making Himself their King. But he was not willing to be wanting in any obligation of his office, or to thwart, on the other hand, people so restless and turbulent, and so he despatched their petition with great sagacity and prudence. For he did not refuse them the guard, not to give them occasion to lay the blame on him for anything which might afterwards happen, nor did he choose to appoint the soldiers himself and by his own order, lest any suspicion should attach to him, and that there might not be any ground for saying he had agreed with the soldiers to intrigue with the disciples, and allow them to steal away and hide the Body of our Lord. *Habetis*[1] *custodiam*, he said, *ite, custodite sicut scitis*—'You have a guard, the soldiers are at your orders. I do not forbid you, go yourselves, and set the guard as you like, and as you deem to be necessary.' On this order from the Governor, the Priests and the Pharisees collected together a large number of soldiers, and going to the sepulchre they took all care where there was most danger. The sepulchre was hewn out of the living rock, and the Body could not be stolen except by the door, and this was closed by a large stone, so that to remove it required more strength and daring than the disciples, who were weak and timorous, possessed. But that no precaution might be wanting, they secured the sepulchre well, sealing the stone and placing watch and ward on all convenient spots around.

All this was not requisite to restrain the disciples, who were very far from having any thoughts of uniting together in order to steal away and hide the dead. They were so dead with fear themselves, and had betaken themselves to such

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 65.

concealment, that they hardly recovered themselves when our Lord went to seek them and collect them together after He had risen again from the dead. But all these preparations and all this diligence were nevertheless necessary to silence the Jews and convict their obstinacy and pertinacity. For on the one hand they had by taking so many precautions closed up all ways of escape, and so rendered themselves incapable of flying from the truth, and on the other hand they thereby provided witnesses who might give testimony to it, and such witnesses that they could neither undervalue them nor discredit them, but that when they said that our Lord had risen again it must be believed and taken for true, since they had been placed there by the Jews themselves as persons they could trust, in order that the disciples might not give the same out falsely.

Miser et infelix Judæe, says St. Athanasius, *qui mortis vincula dissolvit, non solvet sepulchri sigilla? qui expoliavit infernum, timebit monumenti signacula? Muni sepulchrum signa lapidem, statue milites, obside monumentum custodibus, isto modo egregium opus majus efficis, statuis enim spectatores ac testes resurrectionis, meorumque miraculorum præcones ministros tu præparas*—'O wretched and miserable Jew! He Who broke the chains of death, shall He not break the seals of the sepulchre? He Who despised hell, shall He fear the seals of the monument? Guard the sepulchre, seal the stone, set there soldiers, encircle the monument with guards, and in this way the work which is in itself so excellent thou wilt render still more illustrious; since thou wilt place sentinels there who will be present and be witnesses of My resurrection, and thou wilt prepare for Me servants who will be the proclaimers of My miracles.'

How much there is of truth in what St. Athanasius says is clearly seen from a letter which the Governor Pilate wrote to the Emperor about what had taken place in the Passion of our Saviour, to which Hegesippus refers, and of which Tertullian in very ancient times makes mention. I have, therefore, thought it desirable to give it here. It is of the following tenour—

Pontius Pilatus Claudio Tiberio, salutem,—Nuper accidit (et quod ipse probavi) Judæos per invidiam, se suosque posteros crudeli condemnatione punisse. Denique cum promissum haberent patres eorum, quod illis Deus eorum mitteret de cœlo Sanctum suum, qui eorum Rex merito diceretur, et hunc se promisere per Virginem missurum ad terras; istum itaque, me præside in Judæam Deus Hebræorum cum misisset, et vidissent eum cæcos illuminasse, leprosos mundasse, paralyticos curasse, dæmones ab omnibus fugasse, mortuos etiam suscitasse, imperasse ventis, ambulasse siccis pedibus super undas maris, et multa alia fecisse: cum omnis populus Judæorum eum Filium Dei esse diceret, invidiam contra eum passi sunt principes Judæorum, et timuerunt eum, mihique tradiderunt, et alia pro aliis mihi de eo mentientes dixerunt, asserentes istum magum esse, et contra legem eorum agere. Ego autem credidi ita esse, et flagellatum tradidi illum arbitrio eorum, illi autem crucifixerunt eum, et sepulto custodes adhibuerunt; ille autem, militibus meis custodientibus, tertio die resurrexit. In tantum autem exarsit nequitia Judæorum, ut darent pecuniam custodibus et dicerent, dicite quia discipuli ejus corpus ipsius rapuerunt; sed cum accepissent pecuniam, quod factum fuerat tacere non potuerunt, nam et illum surrexisse testati sunt se vidisse et se a Judæis pecuniam accepisse.

Which being translated is as follows—

'Pontius Pilate to Claudius Tiberius, greeting,—A little while ago (and I know it to be true) the Jews, inflamed by envy and hatred, punished by a heavy condemnation themselves and their posterity. It appears that their forefathers had received a promise from their God that He would send to them from heaven His Holy One, Who, with good reason, should be called their King, and Whom He promised should be sent on earth by means of a Virgin. The God of the Hebrews sent them this same Holy One to Judæa, I being Governor, and when they saw Him enlightening the blind, cleansing the lepers, curing the paralytic, chasing away devils from men's bodies, and even raising the dead, commanding the winds, walking with dry feet on the waves of the sea, and doing other things,

and when all the people of Judæa said He was the Son of God, then the Chiefs of the Jews were filled with envy against Him and with fear of Him, and delivered Him unto me. As they made a great many false charges against Him before me, saying that He was a magician and did many things against their law, I therefore believed them, and, having scourged him, delivered Him up to their will. Then they crucified Him, and after they had buried Him they set a watch over Him. But He, being guarded by my soldiers, rose again the third day. So greatly, however, was the malice of the Jews enkindled, that they gave money to the soldiers, and said, "Say that His disciples have stolen His body away;" but the soldiers after they had received the money, were not able to keep silence, for they bare witness that they saw Him rise, and that they had received that money from the Jews.'

CHAPTER LI.

The Blessed Virgin our Lady awaits the Resurrection of her Son.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN our Lady had now returned from Calvary and the place of the sepulchre to the supper chamber of Mount Sion, doing violence to herself to tear herself away from that spot, and leaving her heart behind her in company with the Body of her Son at the sepulchre. She guided her steps along the same road along which she had seen her Son pass, laden with the wood of the Cross. She was full of sorrow and desolation, renewing as she went the remembrance of all her griefs, her veil and her robes sprinkled with the precious blood of her redemption, and all melting away in tears of love and sorrow. She went along the streets of the city sheltered by the shade and darkness of night, so as not to be recognized by any,

and as this matter was so recent, every one was speaking of it, some in condemnation, and others in defence, and both the one and the other left sharp arrows in her loving heart. Many also would know her and speak of her; and what would they say? Others who knew her better would feel bound to come and address her; and what would these say? At last she entered the cenacle on Sion, and there her tears were renewed, as she remembered the mysteries which our Lord had celebrated there the night before, encircled (like the olive by its shoots) by all His Apostles. Now, what a sudden change! They had all taken flight, and were in concealment; and He, after so bitter and ignominious a death, was laid in the sepulchre!

The Blessed Virgin entered into the house, and retired into a place apart therein. Then taking leave, with tears, of the holy women who had accompanied her, she remained alone to weep and relieve herself therewith, and began to pour out her heart in the presence of God with the most ardent affections. She contemplated her Son now dead, the world redeemed, God appeased, the way to heaven opened, the prophecies accomplished, and the Blood of the New Testament shed. She retraced in thought many and many times the sorrowful Stations of that day, and her soul received great benefit by recalling them to memory, and that royal eagle of prayer, who was wont to rise to the highest air and fix her eyes intently on the sun, was now locked in the embrace of this inanimate corpse, tasting His blood and feeding thereon as it flowed out of all His wounds.

She recalled to mind the preceding night, when, with so much tenderness and reverence He had taken leave of her. She beheld Him in the Garden, in His Agony, and engaged in such persevering prayer; she accompanied Him to the tribunals, going to and fro with Him to the judges; she noted His answers, marvelled at His silence, entered into His feelings, reverenced His obedience, and lovingly embraced His immense charity. She dwelt in memory on all the minute details of the trial, and as one who knew how to estimate such a treasure, she was careful not to lose a single particle of it. She compassion-

ated His griefs; she gazed upon His sorrowful aspect; she listened to His sighs; she was attentive to His words; and she collected together in her soul all those precious tears which, mixed with His blood, ran down His face. She kept all these memories in her breast, and pondered upon them in her heart.

She descended in thought into Limbus and was present at the solemn festival of the holy Fathers. She recalled in spirit the sepulchre, she beheld the pierced hands and feet, and once again the cruel blows of the hammers, by which He was nailed upon the Cross, sounded in her ears and wounded her heart; she beheld His head pierced with thorns, His hair matted with blood, His beard torn, His cheeks livid, His chest disjointed, His shoulders wounded, His side and His Heart opened—and she cried aloud with tears to God to raise up again and restore to His Body His Soul, which, when about to die, His Son, with a loud voice, and in her hearing, had placed in His hands.

She thought on the Apostles who had taken flight and were hidden; on the other disciples who had believed in Him and were now scandalized; and on the mystical Body of her Son, not less wounded and lacerated than His natural body. And she, as the Mother of the one as well as of the other, desired life and health for both, and to gather them together and shelter them and revive them with the warmth of her own loving heart.

In these thoughts and prayers the whole of the Friday night was spent, and as soon as day broke, that loving Mother took all care and diligence to gather together the children who had been dispersed by the force of the tempest, and who with the consciousness of their fault were full of sorrow and discouragement. Where were they all? What would they do? What would they say? What would be their thoughts? What tears would they shed? And when the blood of Jesus Christ began to work a spirit of penitence in them, they would be full of confusion at their weakness and of repentance for their sin, animated to amendment, and desirous to find favour at the hands of their Master that they might be restored to His grace. And what greater favour, what greater consolation or cause of confidence

as to being restored to the favour of the Son could they have, than the finding His Mother favourable to them? Perchance the Blessed Virgin sent the Evangelist in search of them, and in her name to salute them and encourage them, and where did he find them? Who gave him tidings of them? Or, perchance, all or the greater portion of them on having fled from the Garden, collected together in the supper chamber, and remained hidden there until the Blessed Virgin returned, leaving her Son dead in the sepulchre; and then, with what tears would they receive her? How they would all kneel at her feet, acknowledging her excellent dignity, extolling her faith, praising and exalting her courage, delighting in her protection, and desiring and entreating her favour!

O most merciful Virgin, receive the sinners who have recourse to thee! These men whom thou seest here cowardly and weak, are the captains whom thy Son has appointed for the conquest of the world; they are the princes of His kingdom, the shepherds of His fold, and the firm bones which are to sustain His mystical Body. Thou thinkest it no little thing, O Lady, that thy Son, in this His bitter absence, left thee this sweet and highly prized pledge; so greatly did He love us, that when He was delivered up into the hands of His enemies He especially commanded them to do His own no evil. And this innocent Lamb having allowed Himself to be sacrificed with so great cruelty, promised that His bones should not be touched. This, O Lady, is the family which remains in thy charge; this is the Church, which though tender and weak as a child, is now truly formed and strengthened within the shelter of thy maternal womb, in order that being vivified in due season by the fulness of the Holy Spirit, it may come to light by a blessed nativity, to the glory of Him Who redeemed it and made it beautiful with His Blood, and for the good of all mankind.

In this way all that day of the Sabbath passed in that holy house and cenacle of Sion. The Evangelist would recount very minutely to the rest of his fellow-disciples the history of the Passion at which he had been present, and the different

kinds of insults and sorrows which had been showered that day upon his good Master, the patience with which He had suffered, the gentleness with which He had answered, the silence He had kept, the dignity and calmness He had preserved, the words which He had spoken on the Cross, the great cry with which He had expired, the signs and wonders which had happened upon His death, and the words with which the Centurion and those who surrounded him had confessed Him. This talk would console them in their great tribulation, and above all, the presence and the words of the Blessed Virgin, who, forgetful of her own bitter pain, attended to their needs and weakness, gave them a sure hope of the resurrection of her Son, and the fulfilment of all His words and promises. This, then, was the state of things on that day. The Chief Priests persevered in their envy and fury, and desired to lay hands on the disciples, in order to do to them what they had done to their Master, and not to rest until they had blotted out His memory from the world. The people were scandalized and divided in opinion, all speaking of the matter, some in one way and some in another. Sone approved of our Saviour's Person and others condemned Him, following the opinion of their scribes and leaders. All were amazed when they compared the history of His life, His preaching, and His miracles, with the event of a death so unfortunate and ignominious, and of this there was much talk in all places and by all persons. The Apostles were timorous and in concealment, waiting to see what would be the end of such new and strange things. The Blesssed Virgin our Lady retired within her cell, wept over her solitude with marvellous patience and conformity to the will of God, and with a sure and certain hope of seeing her Son risen and in glory. The dead Body of our Lord was in the sepulchre, wrapped in its linen cloths and napkins, prepared with myrrh and aloes in great abundance, as was the custom.

The sepulchre itself was well sealed and guarded, and thus provision was made against all the calumnies which might be brought forward by the Jews, and hearts were disposed to faith in His resurrection. For the sepulchre was new, and in it no

other dead man had ever been laid, that it might not be said that it was some one else who had risen again. It was hollowed out of the living rock, that it might faithfully keep its deposit, and that no one might be able to remove the Body excepting by the door. The door was well fastened and sealed, and that there might be no occasion for fear, it was defended by a sufficient number of soldiers, if by chance any should come to steal away the dead Body, and also that they might be witnesses that He had come forth alive of Himself. Lastly, His Soul was in the Limbus of the holy Fathers, giving even there, in the kingdom of hell, proofs of His power and majesty, encircled by kings, patriarchs, and prophets, and by all the good that the world had ever held until that day. Withdrawn, as it were, for that brief space into the secret parts of the earth, He was arranging His triumph, and disposing that solemn entry which on the third day He was to make into the world with so great and so illustrious a company, and after forty days, into heaven, taking after Him the captives whom He had ransomed, according as it is written in the Psalms[1]—*Ascendens in altum captivam duxit captivitatem*, and as the Apostle says[2]—'He that ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things with the glory and majesty of His Presence.'

[1] lxvii. 19. [2] Ephes. iv. 9.

Ad Majorem Dei gloriam.

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AUTHOR
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